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THE  
HOLY BIBLE,  
CONTAINING THE  
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS:

WITH A  
COMMENTARY  
ARRANGED IN LECTURES FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES,

BY THE  
REV. CHARLES GIRDLESTONE, M.A.  
RECTOR OF ALDERLEY, CHESHIRE.

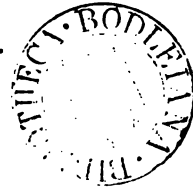
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IN SIX VOLUMES.  
VOL. III.  
JOB—SONG OF SOLOMON.

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 114. 1. The psalmist biddeth the earth tremble at God's presence.  
 115. 1. The psalmist exhorteth to trust in God.  
 116. 1. The psalmist professeth thankfulness for deliverance.  
 117. 1. The psalmist exhorteth all nations to praise God.  
 118. 1. The psalmist praiseth God for saving him out of trouble.  
 119. 1. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.  
 119. 17. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.  
 119. 33. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.  
 119. 49. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.

## LECTURE 951—973.

951. Our being God's people should move us to praise Him.  
 952. That God in redeeming us has a view to our obedience.  
 953. God's mercifulness to us in our backslidings.  
 954. The connexion of God's justice and mercifulness.  
 955. Of praising God whilst yet in captivity to sin.  
 956. Instances of God's delivering men out of trouble.  
 957. Men the authors of their misery, God their Deliverer.  
 958. How we may triumph without presumption.  
 959. The inspired language of imprecation accounted for.  
 960. A prophetic lamentation of Christ and his church.  
 961. The progress and triumphs of the Gospel.  
 962. Of God's righteousness in his covenant.  
 963. The blessedness of God's faithful servants.  
 964. Of worshipping the true God in his right name.  
 965. That it is an awful thing for God to manifest Himself.  
 966. The blessedness of fearing God.  
 967. Of loving God in return for his goodness.  
 968. Against being proud and jealous of our Christian privileges.  
 969. God's mercy shewn in succouring the helpless.  
 970. The blessedness of doing all things as God tells us.  
 971. The blessedness of attending to that which God speaks.  
 972. The blessedness of walking always in the way of the Lord.  
 973. The blessedness of being guided by God's judgments.



PSALM 119—134.

- 119. 63. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 119. 81. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 119. 97. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 119. 113. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 119. 129. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 119. 145. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 119. 161. The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.
- 120. 1. The psalmist complaineth of the false and the quarrelsome.
- 121. 1. The psalmist professeth trust in God's help, and is assured of it.
- 122. 1. David expresseth his affection for Jerusalem.
- 123. 1. The psalmist professeth his dependence on God.
- 124. 1. David blesseth God for being on the side of Israel.
- 125. 1. The psalmist declareth the security of the righteous.
- 126. 1. The psalmist celebrateth the return from captivity.
- 127. 1. The psalmist ascribeth every good thing to God's blessing.
- 128. 1. The psalmist promiseth blessings to the godly.
- 129. 1. The psalmist celebrateth the troubles and deliverances of Israel.
- 130. 1. The psalmist declareth his hope of mercy.
- 131. 1. David professeth his humility.
- 132. 1. The psalmist rehearseth David's desire to build the temple.
- 133. 1. David highly commendeth unity among brethren.
- 134. 1. The psalmist exhorteth God's servants to bless Him.

LECTURE 974—995.

- 974. The blessedness of obeying God's commandments.
- 975. The blessedness of being taught of God in his precepts.
- 976. The blessedness of believing God's testimonies.
- 977. The blessedness of having respect unto God's statutes.
- 978. The blessedness of being convinced of God's righteousness.
- 979. The blessedness of having access to infallible truth.
- 980. Not tradition, but divine revelation.
- 981. Of dwelling in the midst of the ungodly.
- 982. The assurance of safety given to those who trust in God.
- 983. Of our longing for Jerusalem which is above.
- 984. The duty of serving God with faithfulness and love.
- 985. The blessedness of being the elect of God.
- 986. The blessedness of trusting devoutly in God.
- 987. Our way to reap the harvest of holiness and heaven.
- 988. Our way of peace and prosperity is to trust in God.
- 989. The holy happiness of domestic life.
- 990. The sin, repentance, and amendment of the national church.
- 991. The comfort and security of hope.
- 992. The duty of submissiveness.
- 993. Of desiring to serve God in our heavenly habitation.
- 994. The happiness of dwelling together in love.
- 995. Of desiring to join in praising God in heaven.

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- 135. 1. The psalmist giveth reasons for praising the Lord.
- 136. 1. The psalmist dwelleth on God's everlasting love.
- 137. 1. The psalmist lamenteth the captivity in Babylon.
- 138. 1. David declareth and foretelleth the praise of God.
- 139. 1. David setteth forth the omniscience of God.
- 140. 1. David prayeth and trusteth in the help of God.
- 141. 1. David prayeth to be preserved from evil practices.
- 142. 1. David pointeth out his comfort when in trouble.
- 143. 1. David pleadeth earnestly for mercy and grace.
- 144. 1. David blesseth God, and declareth the happiness of God's people.
- 145. 1. David praiseth God for his greatness and his goodness.
- 146. 1. The psalmist resolveth to praise God perpetually.
- 147. 1. The psalmist calleth on Zion to praise God.
- 148. 1. The psalmist exhorteth every thing to praise God.
- 149. 1. The psalmist calleth on the church to praise God.
- 150. 1. The psalmist exhorteth us to praise God many ways.

## LECTURE 996—1011.

- 996. The blessedness of not being idle worshippers.
- 997. The supreme mercy of God in our redemption.
- 998. That we are liable to be ensnared by the mystic Babylon.
- 999. The Gospel promotes genuine civil liberty.
- 1000. The necessity of loving God unfeignedly.
- 1001. Of being more in earnest in our faith.
- 1002. Of praying to be delivered from the power of temptation.
- 1003. The comfort of praying for the help of God.
- 1004. Of fervency in our prayers to God.
- 1005. The effect of being sanctioned and blessed by God.
- 1006. The praises of God set forth.
- 1007. The attributes of God are unchangeable.
- 1008. The powerful and sure influence of God's grace.
- 1009. How few do what they can in praising God.
- 1010. The grounds on which the saints rejoice in the Lord.
- 1011. How to use the Book of Psalms in praising God.

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- 1. 1. The use of the Proverbs.
- 1. 7. An exhortation to resist the enticement of sinners.
- 1. 20. The warning words of divine wisdom.
- 2. 1. How to find knowledge. The use thereof.
- 3. 1. Exhortations to various duties.
- 3. 19. Further exhortations to duty.

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- 1012. The benefit of knowledge.
- 1013. That we ought not to consent when invited to transgress.
- 1014. The folly of rejecting warnings.
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- 1017. Of knowing the right means towards life eternal.

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## PROVERBS 4—17.

4. 1. Solomon declareth how his father instructed him.
5. 1. The end of following after the strange woman.
6. 1. Against suretyship, idleness, and frowardness.
6. 20. Of obeying parental instruction.
7. 1. The arts of an abandoned woman described.
8. 1. Wisdom proclaimeth herself aloud.
8. 22. Wisdom the attribute of God.
9. 1. Wisdom's invitation; and that of the strange woman.
10. 1. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
10. 15. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
11. 1. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
11. 17. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
12. 1. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
12. 14. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
13. 1. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
13. 14. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
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15. 19. Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.
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1019. Matrimony, God's ordinance for man's benefit.
1020. The character of an arrogant, false, and cruel man.
1021. The habit of submission to authority.
1022. The sins of the adulterer hard to repent of.
1023. Of seeking for wisdom, and loving it.
1024. Of approaching to the likeness of divine wisdom.
1025. The end of those who resort to an abandoned woman.
1026. The excellency of holiness manifested by contrast.
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1029. The retribution of the good and of the evil.
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1031. The importance of a right conversation.
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1033. The inheritance which good men leave to their children.
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1035. National religion the way to national prosperity.
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5. 1. The Preacher warneth us against vanities in our worship.  
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7. 15. The Preacher sheweth the conclusions of wisdom.  
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9. 1. The Preacher exhorteth to joy and diligence.  
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10. 1. The Preacher remarketh on wisdom, and on the want of it.  
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1070. The great loss of living an ungodly life.  
1071. The duty of enjoying thankfully God's good gifts.  
1072. Of looking forward from time to eternity.  
1073. Better things than those of earth are awaiting us.  
1074. Our advantage in having a settled monarchy.  
1075. Of making good our vows unto God.  
1076. Of enjoying thankfully but not selfishly.  
1077. All worldly plans of life are vain alike.  
1078. The advantage of viewing things wisely.  
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1080. The wisdom of planning for eternity.  
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1083. The advantage of being as well educated as possible.  
1084. The wisdom of not meddling with affairs of state.  
1085. Of giving and enjoying, with a view to the future judgment.  
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1. 1. The Bride and Bridegroom address each other.
2. 1. The Bridegroom continueth to converse with the Bride.
3. 1. The Bridegroom and Bride separate, and meet again.
4. 1. The beauty of the Bride.
5. 1. The Bride seeketh and commendeth the Bridegroom.
6. 1. The Bridegroom commendeth the Bride.
7. 1. The beauty of the Bride is once more commended.
8. 1. The Bride communeth with the Bridegroom.
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## LECTURE 1087—1095.

1087. As Christ has loved the church, so ought we to love Him.
1088. The invitation of Christ to his church.
1089. The glory of the heavenly Bridegroom.
1090. The excellency of the church.
1091. That we share Christ's love with all his church.
1092. Of aiming at perfection, that we may please Christ.
1093. The church, being justified, must be actually holy.
1094. God has provided for our understanding love divine.
1095. Christ's invitation. The prayer of the church.

## THE BOOK OF JOB 1. 1—3.

### *The character of Job.*

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

2 And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

### LECTURE 761.

#### *Of attaining to perfection.*

The country in which Job lived was to the eastward of Judea, not far from the land of the Chaldees. And the time was about half a century previous to the time of Moses. Thus much will at least appear highly probable, upon a diligent comparison of the names of persons mentioned in the book of Job, with the same names as they occur in the book of Genesis. There is also good reason to suppose, that Moses added the first two chapters and the last, to the book as it originally existed. And if Job, who at first composed this book, used a language somewhat different from the Hebrew, it was no doubt Moses who translated it into the Hebrew tongue. We have therefore a twofold warrant for the divine authority of this portion of holy Scripture. It is evident from the book itself, that the things which Job wrote must in part have been revealed to him by God. See Ch. 38—41. And it is certain, that whatsoever Moses introduced into the volume of the Jewish Scriptures, he must have been directed by the Holy Ghost in so doing. Let us rejoice to find, on the testimony of this sure witness, that Job glorified God so greatly by his holy and consistent life. Let us praise God for this his faithful servant. Let us thank God for this eminent example, of one who was "perfect and upright," "one that feared God and eschewed evil." An eminent example. A profitable pattern of that entire devotedness of life, which whether before the Law, or under it, or under the Gospel, has ever been the proper fruit of genuine religion. There must be no reserve in our obedience; no purpose to please ourselves in any thing at the risk of displeasing God. We may be still liable to fall as Job was. And like Job we may in some things still actually transgress. But we must never do so purposely, wilfully, or habitually. We must never allow ourselves in any sin that we know of. It must be the settled purpose of our hearts, and the settled plan of our lives, to do the will of God in every thing. To this perfection Job attained, without so much as the guidance of the written Law. How much more ought we to aim at it, and attain to it, with the light and assistance of the Gospel!

*Satan obtaineth leave to tempt Job.*

4 And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one on his day ; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all : for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power ; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

## LECTURE 762.

*How thankfully we ought to yield up all earthly joys.*

It was a principal part of the prosperity of Job, that " there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters." Ver. 2. And it was owing to the abundance of his substance, that his children were able to enjoy the frequent feasts here spoken of. But Job appears to have been well aware, that he had much to answer for, in proportion to the large amount of blessings, which it had pleased God to give him. And therefore he used to watch, with holy jealousy, lest his children should be tempted, in the times of their festivity, to sin against God. He knew how likely it was, that when they had eaten and were full, they would forget the great Giver of all good things, and take the name of their God in vain. See Deut. 6. 11, 12. And at the end of their periods of feasting, he used to offer a sacrifice for each of them, by way of making atonement for any such sins into which they might have fallen. Let Christians who enjoy abundance learn hence, to be ever on their guard against the sins which abundance is most apt to breed. Let Christian parents learn hence, to ward off as far



as possible the temptations which beset their children; and whatsoever sins they are most likely to fall into, let them remember to plead in their behalf the all prevailing merits of Christ our Saviour. Little can that father have reflected upon his own past trials, who does not tremble to think of the risks his children must run as they grow to man's estate, of the many sins and sorrows, to which they are then straightway exposed. And little can he have experienced in his own case, the benefit of prayer, and the privilege of applying unto God for the pardon of his sins through Christ, if he does not frequently intercede for those whom he has been the means of bringing into the world, and earnestly pray to God, that they may be justified, sanctified, and saved, through the atonement of the death of Christ.

How different is such watchful care and holy jealousy as this, how different from the foul suspicions, and the false imputing of selfish motives, which are here set in the most hateful light, as practised against Job by the accuser of our brethren! "Doth Job fear God for nought?" His piety, Satan argues, is but selfishness in another form. It is merely for his own present gain that Job fears and serves the Lord. If he were now deprived of his great substance, he would serve God no longer. Instead of blessing the Lord, and praising Him for his goodness, Job would begin, like other men, to murmur under chastisement. Nay, so far does Satan go in his accusations as to say, "he will curse thee to thy face." Such is the wicked suggestion of the evil one. Such are the hard thoughts which evil disposed persons often harbour and express, against those who are not ashamed to own that they are servants of the most high God. Let us watch that we give no handle to any such suspicions, by manifesting too fond an attachment for the present gains of godliness, in regard to this world's comforts. Let us adorn our Christian profession by the habitual practice of self denial; and by the cheerfulness with which we bear any affliction, which God thinks fit to lay on us. We do indeed gain usually much of present comfort, independently of spiritual peace and joy, by adopting the principles and the practices of the Gospel. Health, wealth, and respectability of character, are all in favour of those who live according to the will of God, as revealed by Christ and his apostles. But let not these be the chief objects of our desire. These let us be prepared to lose, if so it happen, and to bear the loss with thankfulness. Nay, even life itself let us be willing to lay down, for God's sake, if occasion should require; glad to give this proof that we look for brighter joys than any which this present world can yield. Thus should we not only silence the gainsayers of our faith, but also put to shame the great enemy of our souls. And instead of deeming an afflictive providence matter of mystery and regret, we should clearly see in the heaviest afflictions the means of giving greater glory to God, and of gaining greater happiness for ourselves.

*Job deprived of goods and children blesseth God.*

13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house :

14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen *were* plowing, and the asses feeding beside them :

15 And the Sabeans fell *upon* them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16 While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17 While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants

with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

18 While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house :

19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

## LECTURE 763.

*The use of viewing all we have as God's free gift.*

See here the result of that limited permission which the Lord gave to Satan against Job, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." Ver. 12. See the cruel use which Satan makes of such power, as God allows him to possess, that he may exercise the faith and patience of mankind. See the precious fruit of resignation, thankfulness, and praise, which ought to abound in us, as it did in Job, in consequence of being subjected to Satan's malice. How can we think it strange that we are exposed to trials so fiery, to griefs so sore, when we see what a holy heavenly temper they are fitted to work in us? How can we marvel, as we are apt to do, that God should allow such an one as Satan to trouble us in body or in soul, when we behold the patience of Job; when we see the righteous sufferer falling down upon the ground and worshipping;

when we hear him uttering words so remarkably expressive of true piety, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?"

This is one of the most important lessons which this whole book appears intended to convey, namely, that adversity or any other trial whatsoever, when received by man with devout resignation, is sure to be overruled by God for good. It may be that the tempter gains some short lived triumph. It may be, that the faithful Christian is prevailed upon by Satan, as Job was for a while, to think hastily in his mind, or to speak unadvisedly with his lips. But though the righteous fall, he shall not be cast down. See Ps. 37. 24. And when we read of "the patience of Job," at this beginning of his history, it is well for us to call to mind "the end of the Lord," which St. James mentions at the same time; James 5. 11; meaning the blessedness of Job's after life, the pitifulness and tender mercy of God, in sustaining him through all his trials, satisfying him in all his doubts, forgiving him all his sins, and blessing "the latter end of Job more than his beginning." Ch. 42. 12.

Greatly it would help us to bear afflictions with patience like this of Job, if we would more frequently consider the important truth which Job expressed on this occasion, that all our present blessings are God's free gift. It is to Him that we are altogether indebted for the use of them. And when He thinks fit to take any of them away from us, instead of counting this for so much loss, we ought rather to dwell upon our great gain in enjoying them whilst He suffered us to keep them. Naked we came into this present world, and naked shall we depart out of it. Whatsoever in the mean time we possess, our goods, as food and raiment, the necessities, the comforts, or the luxuries of life, our friends and near relations, and all the pleasure we derive from their affection, these all are freely given us by that great and gracious God, to whom we also owe it, that we are alive to enjoy them. Were we but well accustomed to think of this all the time we are enjoying them, were we but also mindful, that He who freely gives us these things, reserves the power of taking them away whensoever He sees fit, we should be better able to bear the worst of tidings, and to bear the heaviest of afflictions, not only without charging God foolishly, but also with a disposition to thank God cheerfully.

Thanks be to Thee, O God, for all Thou givest us! Thanks be to Thee, for all Thou takest away! All, all we have, and all we are, is thine. Oh that thy will may be in all things ours! Oh that whatsoever harm befalls us here, we may be able to say with holy Job, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"



*Job is smitten with a sore disease, and is still resigned.*

1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause.

4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life:

5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life.

7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shubite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him.

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that *his* grief was very great.

#### LECTURE 764.

*Whatsoever we receive at the hand of God, all is good.*

How watchful ought it to make us, when we reflect, that we have an enemy so active and so ill disposed as Satan, and that God allows him to try and tempt us! And though we gain one victory, and repulse one of his assaults, how carefully must we still be on our guard against his frequently renewed attacks! Job had borne with exemplary patience the loss of his children and his goods. But will he put up also with the loss of health? will he still bless God instead of cursing Him, if his life should be

placed in jeopardy by a painful and loathsome disease? Satan thinks and suggests that he will not. God permits Satan to make the trial. And as far as we here read of the result, Job holds fast his integrity, and shews himself to be, as God had pronounced him, "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." Reduced to the lowest state of distress, by sickness, want, and sorrow, he sits down in a place where ashes were thrown out, as one not fit to occupy his former dwelling. There he is fain to dress his foul ulcers with no better help than a piece of broken earthenware. But when his wife tempts him in these miserable circumstances, to cast off his allegiance to the Lord, he firmly rebukes her foolishness, and steadfastly expresses his own settled purpose to continue faithful to the end, saying, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

The fact that all our blessings are given us by God, is first considered by Job, as a good reason why we ought to part with them readily at his bidding. This is the weighty argument of his former saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Ch. 1. 21. The same fact, that God gives us all our blessings, is here brought forward as a reason why we ought to receive patiently, as at his hand, whatsoever evil He inflicts, or allows to be inflicted. Job knew that he had previously received good things in great abundance. He felt it no more than just, that he should now in turn receive evil things abundantly.

But behold the goodness of the Lord! He contrives to make our portion of affliction a means of everlasting benefit. In all parts of his word He plainly teaches, that it is good for us to be afflicted. And more especially in the New Testament, He has brought to light that life and immortality, with a view to which all this world's sufferings sink into the merest trifles, or rather are justly considered as valuable helps in fitting us for heaven. This is the consolation which Christian friends are privileged to offer to each other. This is comfort which Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar were unable to minister to Job. Even God, when He vouchsafes to answer Job, at the end of the book, dwells more on his mighty power than on his transcendent goodness. And it is not till we view his attributes and character as revealed in the Gospel, and in the person of his Son, that we are assured infallibly that "God is love." 1 John 4. 8. Then all things that He does or permits to be done, are at once acknowledged to be excellent. Then whether we meet with what men call evil, or with what men call good, we feel sure that we have exactly that lot and portion, which God orders for the best. And we have the ample satisfaction of believing, that whatsoever we receive at the hand of God, all is good.

*Job revileth his day, and wisheth he had never been born.*

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| <p>1 After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.</p> <p>2 And Job spake, and said,</p> <p>3 Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night <i>in which</i> it was said, There is a man child conceived.</p> <p>4 Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.</p> <p>5 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.</p> <p>6 <i>As for</i> that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be</p> | <p>joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months.</p> <p>7 Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein.</p> <p>8 Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning.</p> <p>9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but <i>have</i> none; neither let it see the dawning of the day:</p> <p>10 Because it shut not up the doors of my <i>mother's</i> womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 765.

*Against wishing any thing to be otherwise than as God orders it.*

Grief, such as that with which Job was overtaken, is indeed a sacred thing; and it ought to be approached, even by those who come as comforters, with no common measure of respect. Wisely therefore did Job's three friends to sit down with him in silence for a time; and rather to wait till he saw fit to speak, than first to speak themselves. See Ch. 2. 13. But what is the tenour of the words, which at length burst forth from the lips of afflicted Job? How are we to understand his vehement expressions? How can we reconcile his murmuring language, with his steadfast piety, and exemplary patience? It must be owned that there is herein a manifest inconsistency. We may indeed contend justly, that these wishes of Job were uttered in language which is highly figurative, more in the style of poetry than of simple prose; and that his object might be not so much to murmur at his sufferings, as to express the intensity of his pain and grief. We may argue that affliction, unless felt to be afflictive, cannot yield its proper fruit in the chastisement of the soul; and that therefore it was well for Job to shew how deeply he felt his present tribulation. But it is evident, that Job not only felt his affliction deeply; he was also disposed to murmur at it wrongfully. And after all that we may say properly in extenuation of this righteous man's offence, it is vain to deny that he offended.

And why should we attempt to deny it? when we have the oft repeated testimony of God's own word, that "there is no man that sinneth not." 1 Kings 8. 46. Why should we attempt to deny it? when we have Job's own admission of his sinfulness, in this humble declaration made to God, after God had vouch-



safed to answer him: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Ch. 42. 6. God had indeed been pleased to call him perfect and upright. See ch. 2. 3. But God had nowhere said, that Job was more than human. And the highest praise that can be spoken, on the very highest authority, of one that is but man, can never be intended to imply, that such an one is not frail, liable to be tempted, and when tempted liable to transgress. It is enough, if he does not sin wilfully, greedily, or habitually; if he does not consent unto sin, but abhors it, as soon as his awakened conscience reproves him for disobeying God. It is enough, if when he falls he is not cast down, but arises by dint of repentance and faith; more humble, more watchful, more thankful, more full of love towards that good God, who at the first loved us when we were sinners, and who ever after, when we are truly penitent, justifies us anew. Where God is served in a spirit such as this, sin being continually more and more subdued under the power of renewing grace, there, though He must still see much that is amiss, He is not extreme to mark it, and though He must be aware of much imperfection in the most faithful of his servants, He counts them perfect for Christ's sake.

Admitting then, that when Job reviled his day, and wished that he had never been born, his words amounted to sinful murmuring, let us remember how natural such wishes are in the extremity of sorrow and suffering; and let us watch that we are never tempted in like manner to wish any thing to be otherwise than God has ordained. We are perhaps too anxious to speculate on the precise amount and nature of Job's transgression, and too apt to forget, that these things are set down in Scripture for our own warning, correction, and instruction in righteousness. He that was a pattern of patience, was at length prevailed upon to harbour a rebellious wish, and to utter a rash complaint. How great then is our risk, lest we complain rashly, or wish rebelliously! Our troubles may have never been so great as those of Job. They may never have been such as to make us regret that we have been born into the world. But have we never repined at being born in the station, or with the infirmities, or subject to the disadvantages, in the midst of which our lot is cast? Have no disasters from without, or disturbances of passion within, ever wrung from our hearts this rash question towards God, Why hast Thou made me thus? Considering our advantages of knowledge, and our high calling as sons of God by adoption of grace, in Christ Jesus, we ought to feel, that the least murmur of discontent in us, is as far from true devotion to the Lord, as this impassioned lamentation on the part of Job. And we should then resolve, as we read this history, that no art or malice of the devil, shall induce us, for a single moment, to wish that any thing which God orders were otherwise than as He thinks fit to order it.

*Job complaineth of life, repining at his afflictions.*

11 Why died I not from the womb? *why* did I *not* give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?

12 Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?

13 For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest.

14 With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves;

15 Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver:

16 Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants *which* never saw light.

17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling; and there the weary be at rest.

18 *There* the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.

19 The small and great are there; and the servant *is* free from his master.

20 Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter *in* soul;

21 Which long for death, but it *cometh* not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures;

22 Which rejoice exceedingly, *and* are glad, when they can find the grave?

23 *Why is light given* to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?

24 For my sighing *cometh* before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters.

25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

26 I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

## LECTURE 766.

*The value of life to the most afflicted of mankind.*

We have abundant reason for maintaining, that the whole of Scripture is inspired; or, in other words, that the holy men who wrote it, wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. At the same time we must remember, that they were moved to write down truly many things which men had done or said wickedly. And we must watch that we do not attribute inspiration to those words thus written, which are merely the utterance of man's ignorance and sin. Job was a holy man, who in the writing of this book, was undoubtedly guided by the Spirit of God. But Job was not inspired to curse his day, or to wish that he had never been born. Even here however the Holy Spirit guided him to set down the exact purport of that which he had wished and said, in order that we might be better edified by the discourses which ensued. And it is possible, that in the expression of his murmurs, Job may have been led to use language, and to think thoughts, which, had he never been an inspired man, he could never have conceived. As God's grace of holiness did not altogether fail him, upon his falling into this one transgression, so neither was

God's light of inspiration altogether thereby extinguished. And even when he spoke unadvisedly, or at least when he wrote down by God's direction what he had unadvisedly spoken, in the midst of the dark cloud of human wilfulness we discern the light of divine truth.

These views, if just, will help us to account for much that is most striking and instructive, intermixed with Job's words of murmuring. It was Satan who suggested complaints against God's dealings. It was from the Spirit of God that Job had learnt how to describe the relief which death yields to the afflicted, in terms which seem beyond the reach of man's ability. Let us learn then, as from God telling us, how sure and how sweet is the rest provided for the suffering Christian in the asylum of the grave. Whatever vexations here beset our path, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." Whatever bondage we here fall into, "There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master;" that is to say, the slave is free from his lord. Only let us remember, that this holds not good in the slavery of sin; but rather the contrary is the case. In order to be free in death, we must be delivered from the power of sin whilst yet we live. For they who live and die in Satan's service, become at death his bondsmen for evermore.

Such reflexions we may profitably make on so much of Job's lamentation as appears to have been expressed under a divine impulse. But as to Job's murmuring because trouble came upon him, though he had not allowed himself to feel secure in his prosperity, and as to his complaining questions, "Why died I not from the womb?" and again, "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?" to these we may make answer, applying the answer to ourselves, if ever we are tempted to be weary of our lives: It is because life is a blessing, even to them that are most sorely afflicted; it is because life on earth is the way to life eternal in the heavens. It is because a life of trouble is often the safest and the surest way to an eternity of happiness. It is because, if we suffer here with Christ, we shall be also glorified together. Happy therefore they who share Christ's cross, for they shall share his throne! Happy they who instead of repining under trouble, rejoice in tribulation; yea, even count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations; provided they fall not in them! For it is of such as these that it is written in the book of Revelation, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And again: "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7. 14, 17.



*Eliphaz admonisheth Job ; relateth his vision.*

- 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,  
 2 *If* we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?  
 3 Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.  
 4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.  
 5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.  
 6 *Is* not *this* thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?  
 7 Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?  
 8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.  
 9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.  
 10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.  
 11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.  
 12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.  
 13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,  
 14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.  
 15 Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up:  
 16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image *was* before mine eyes, *there was* silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*,  
 17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?  
 18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:  
 19 How much less *in* them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation *is* in the dust, *which* are crushed before the moth?  
 20 They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever, without any regarding *it*.  
 21 Doth not their excellency *which is* in them go away? they die, even without wisdom.

## LECTURE 767.

*Against presuming to judge the ways of God.*

The friends of Job, who came to him as comforters, appear to have been in too great haste to reprove him for his murmurs, instead of first soothing his distress. They were right however in considering, that faithful admonition is an act of greater kindness to a friend who is in fault, than silent acquiescence in his error. On comparing the great principles on which they argue, with other passages of Scripture, it will be found that they are the dictates of divine truth. And the vision, which Eliphaz mentions in this chapter, plainly proves, that he was one of those

among the patriarchs, to whom God vouchsafed to manifest his will by a supernatural revelation. He may have been mistaken in applying to Job's conduct and misfortunes some of those principles of sacred truth, which are here so powerfully set forth. But they are principles of sacred truth notwithstanding. And as such we may profitably apply them to our own instruction in righteousness.

Let us then learn from the first part of this chapter, that however easy it may be to give good counsel, and however readily we may exhort others to show themselves patient and resigned, we should find it no easy matter to act upon our counsel, if trouble should overtake ourselves. Let us therefore be the less disappointed, when the advice which we are apt to give proves unsuccessful. And further let us be assured, for our comfort when afflicted, that whilst the wicked, though they have the strength of lions, are sure to perish "by the blast of God," the righteous, they whose fear of God is their confidence, and who are guiltless of wilful sin, these will not perish everlastingly, these will live, through the merits of that Saviour by whose grace they stand, these will live in joy to all eternity.

But above all, let us lay to heart the great lesson of humility, and especially of humility in our thoughts towards God, which is set before us in this fearful vision. Let us stand in awe of the great majesty of One, so great, so good, so altogether holy, as the Lord God Almighty. Let us never presume to scan his dealings with his creatures, or to set up for one moment, even in thought, the judgment of such poor weak mortal beings as we are, against the wisdom of Him who made the worlds. No: let us answer reverently, to the questions put so solemnly, by the voice which addressed itself to Eliphaz, No; mortal man cannot indeed, on any ground, pretend to be just with God, much less pretend to be a judge of what is right for Him to do. No; there is not one of us, not even the most eminent of the saints of God, altogether trustworthy in his sight. No; there is not one even of his angels, altogether wise. And if they who dwell in heaven are liable to be charged with folly, how much less may we pretend to wisdom, such wisdom as to scan the dealings of our Maker; we, who dwell on earth, and in a fleshly tabernacle; we, whose flesh is ever hastening to return unto the dust from which it was taken; we, whose whole life is but a progress towards death, and whose memory even our dearest friends in vain endeavour to perpetuate! No; God forbid that we should ever think but with the deepest reverence, and the most entire resignation, of whatsoever He thinks fit to do! God grant, that whensoever we are made aware, that any thing is either ordered by Him in his providence, or revealed by Him in his word, we may always be heartily inclined, as we are most entirely bound, instead of raising the question of its fitness, not only to acquiesce and to obey, but also to admire and adore!



*Eliphaz adviseth Job to commit his cause to God.*

1 Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?

2 For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.

3 I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation.

4 His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither *is there* any to deliver *them*.

5 Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

6 Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth troublespring out of the ground;

7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

8 I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause:

9 Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:

10 Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields:

11 To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.

12 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprise.

13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

14 They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon day as in the night.

15 But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.

16 So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

## LECTURE 768.

*The duty of trusting in God's providential care.*

In this chapter the words of Eliphaz the Temanite are continued. Having pressed on Job's attention the wickedness of presuming to judge the ways of God, he now points out, how useless it is to seek for help in trouble at any other source than at the hand of the Almighty. "Call now if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" These words seem to allude to the practice of paying divine homage to holy men who had departed this life; one of the earliest corruptions of true religion. Lest Job in his anger should be tempted to commit such folly as this, Eliphaz warns him, that "wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one." He next points out the usual end of them that forsake God; how suddenly, as the Psalmist says, "they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end." Ps. 73. 18. They may seem for a time to be taking root. Yet both they and their children may expect to be soon overtaken by danger, disaster, and death. At the same time Eliphaz owns, that all men are naturally heirs of affliction; the sin of their race having brought them into this miserable con-

dition, and every man's own sin having also provoked the displeasure of the Lord. It would therefore be Job's wisdom, Eliphaz argues, in any case to humble himself before God, and to cast himself on God's mercy and marvellous loving kindness, for comfort, and deliverance out of trouble.

In the striking account of God's righteous dealings, which is next hereupon set forth, it is to be observed, that there is one expression, which appears beyond doubt to be quoted by St. Paul, as the word of divine revelation: namely, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Thus it is that Eliphaz speaks of God's providential dispensations. And when St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians as follows, "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise," he adds by way of proof, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." 1 Cor. 3. 18, 19. This reference stamps the character of revelation on the words before us. Job does indeed afterwards call his friends "miserable comforters;" and finds fault with their discourses as "vain words." Ch. 16. 2, 3. And the Lord also, at the end, says to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." Ch. 42. 7. And even as to Job's own part of the conference, the Lord thus answers him out of the whirlwind, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" Ch. 38. 2. So that we could not fail to err, if we were to suppose that all which the several human speakers say, throughout the book, has the sanction of divine authority. Yet St. Paul plainly attributes such authority to some of the words in the passage before us. We shall therefore probably do right to consider, that parts of what is said by each, though it may be sometimes hard to say which parts, come to us, whether as statements of truth, or as rules for practice, with all the weight of express revelation.

Let us then view the words before us, not merely as a record of what Eliphaz said, but as the dictates of inspired truth. Let us, as these words suggest, meditate devoutly on the greatness and the goodness, on the wisdom and the justice of God. Let us be encouraged in doing right by this striking account of the sure and equitable providence, with which God discomfits those who persist in doing wrong. And when we are in any manner of trouble, need, sickness, sorrow, or adversity, let us adopt the resolution of Eliphaz, not merely as the wisest and best course which man's judgment can prescribe, but as the course prescribed to us with authority from on high; and be ready both to say with him, and to act as well as say, "I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause."

*Eliphaz declareth God's goodness in correcting us.*

- 17 Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:
- 18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.
- 19 He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.
- 20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword.
- 21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.
- 22 At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.
- 23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.
- 24 And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle *shall be* in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.
- 25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed *shall be* great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.
- 26 Thou shalt come to *thy* grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.
- 27 Lo, this we have searched it, so it *is*; hear it, and know thou *it* for thy good.

## LECTURE 769.

*Of recommending true devotion by our own experience.*

In these concluding words of Eliphaz we have an affecting description of God's goodness, and of the happiness of those who put their trust in Him. At the same time we are led to reflect, that though He should seem for a time to hide his face from us, this is no proof that we have lost his favour, but rather a sign of his still aiming at our good. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth." A truth most profitable for Job to dwell upon. A truth most important to be kept in mind by God's ancient people Israel; who, while under the Law, looking for temporal prosperity, as the constant reward of well doing, were too apt to be cast down at the least appearance of reverse. A truth which Christians also often need to be reminded of, however frequently and plainly they have been told in the Gospel, that here they must have tribulation, see John 16. 33, and that their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. See 2 Cor. 3. 17. For notwithstanding these assurances, who is not apt to be cast down when overtaken by grief, or pain, or sickness, or misfortune? Who speaks, and thinks, and feels, when in affliction, as if he were verily persuaded, and thankfully sensible, that "happy is the man whom God correcteth?"

Let us, by frequent meditation on God's word, on the promises it contains, and on the dealings it records, prepare ourselves for our time of trial when it comes, having settled firmly in our minds



the conviction of this truth. When "he maketh sore," let us remember that He also "bindeth up." When "he woundeth," let us confidently expect the time, when this also will be fulfilled in us, that "his hands make whole." However many are the troubles which beset us, He will deliver us from the power of them all. Though there be a dearth of his word in the land, He knows how to feed us with the bread of life. Though there be war even within ourselves, our evil passions striving for the mastery, He can give safety to the soul. And further, He can give us the sense of safety; the happiness of feeling a good hope that we are safe. "Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh." This is something more than not to be destroyed. This is the Christian's privilege at the present, that he trusts he shall be saved to all eternity. He has the happiness of knowing, that unless it be his own fault, his "tabernacle shall be in peace." And "as a shock of corn cometh in in his season," so does the believer look to die, ready and ripe, whether he be young or aged, ripe if he have done what he could to be prepared; ready, whensoever God sees fit to call him hence; ready and ripe for the harvest of eternity. "Lo this," says Eliphaz, at the conclusion of his first address to Job, "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." A forcible and persuasive topic, in dealing with our friends for their improvement in faith or practice. Let us appeal to experience. Let us be able to appeal to our own experience. The devotion which we seek to recommend, will come to them with so much the stronger commendation, in proportion as they have reason to know, that we have tried it in practice, and felt it to be good. Exhortation has little weight, in this matter, unless it be backed by a corresponding example. But when it is known that we are living a holy life, in the fear and in the love of God, when it is seen that we deny ourselves in order to do good to others, when it is heard, on due occasions, from our thankful lips, that we gladly do all this, yea all that in us lies, to glorify Him who bought us with a price, the price of his own precious blood; then we may come forward and say boldly to any friend who seems to need the exhortation, and surely if we have a friend who needs it, we ought not to be slow to say it to him: "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is;" one thing is needful, the saving of the soul is above all comparison the first object worth the anxious desire of a sinner, the Gospel with the things set forth therein is the truth of God revealed from heaven; it is "the power of God unto salvation;" Rom. 1. 16; "hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

May we have courage thus to speak on due occasions! And may they to whom we thus speak have grace to receive gladly the word of exhortation: through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*Job persisteth in his complaint, wisheth for death.*

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| <p>1 But Job answered and said,<br/>         2 Oh that my grief were<br/>         thoroughly weighed, and my<br/>         calamity laid in the balances<br/>         together!<br/>         3 For now it would be heavier<br/>         than the sand of the sea: there-<br/>         fore my words are swallowed up.<br/>         4 For the arrows of the Al-<br/>         mighty <i>are</i> within me, the poison<br/>         whereof drinketh up my spirit:<br/>         the terrors of God do set them-<br/>         selves in array against me.<br/>         5 Doth the wild ass bray when<br/>         he hath grass? or loweth the ox<br/>         over his fodder?<br/>         6 Can that which is unsavoury<br/>         be eaten without salt? or is there<br/>         any taste in the white of an egg?<br/>         7 The things <i>that</i> my soul re-<br/>         fused to touch <i>are</i> as my sor-<br/>         rowful meat.</p> | <p>8 Oh that I might have my<br/>         request; and that God would<br/>         grant <i>me</i> the thing that I long<br/>         for!<br/>         9 Even that it would please<br/>         God to destroy me; that he would<br/>         let loose his hand, and cut me<br/>         off!<br/>         10 Then should I yet have<br/>         comfort; yea, I would harden<br/>         myself in sorrow: let him not<br/>         spare; for I have not concealed<br/>         the words of the Holy One.<br/>         11 What <i>is</i> my strength, that I<br/>         should hope? and what <i>is</i> mine<br/>         end, that I should prolong my<br/>         life?<br/>         12 <i>Is</i> my strength the strength<br/>         of stones? or <i>is</i> my flesh of<br/>         brass?<br/>         13 <i>Is</i> not my help in me? and<br/>         is wisdom driven quite from me?</p> |
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### LECTURE 770.

*That we ought to wish the will of God fulfilled.*

Even our blessed Lord, when suffering on the cross, cried out, in the vehemence of his pain, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27. 46. We cannot then be surprised that Job should give way to extremity of grief. Nor when we remember Job's frailty as a man, can we wonder that he should persist in his complaints, notwithstanding the admonitions he had received from his friend. But whilst we are more disposed to pity than to censure him, still we must mark his faults, in order to avoid them. And when next we are tempted to complain under affliction, if we find ourselves apt to think that our troubles are far heavier than fall to the lot of most men, we may be checked by reflecting, that thus it was that Job complained: "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea." Job had indeed no common measure of affliction. And truly he could say, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." Yet even Job ought to have found comfort in the thought, that "happy is



the man whom God correcteth." Ch. 5. 17. How much less then ought we ever to repine! How much less can we ever be justified in complaining, as if no affliction were so weighty as our own!

But the counsel which Job had received from Eliphaz was one of the things which now chiefly aggrieved him. And it appears to be in the way of a reply to this admonition, that he asks, "Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?" meaning, that as these animals do not complain without reason, neither was he disposed to do so. And as that which is unsavoury needs salt to be eaten with it, so ought the advice given him by his friend to have been rendered palatable by greater kindness of manner, and by more consideration in the matter. Yet surely this is foolishness in man, to reject good counsel, be it ever so unpalatable, be it ever so ungraciously administered. Surely this would be our wisdom, to be willing to be taught even by an enemy, much more by a friend, who is well meaning, though ill judging. Is it true, and just, and right? these are the questions to be considered, in regard to any counsel that is given us; not is it welcome, or pleasantly administered. However the soul may naturally loathe it, and however like unto "our sorrowful meat" it may be made, by the indiscreet zeal of those who offer it; still if it be good advice that is offered us, it is our wisdom, it is our gain, and it ought to be our pleasure, to adopt it. But Job will not take his friend's advice. Neither will he refrain from wishing, if not that he had never been born, at least that now his life might end. He is persuaded that he cannot recover of his disease, and that there can be no use in having his life prolonged. And therefore he wishes that God would cut him off. The thought of approaching death he thinks would give him comfort, and would enable him to bear the weight of his affliction. And especially he declares, that he could face death with a good courage, because he had not "concealed the words of the Holy One," which probably means, because he had been a prophet, and a preacher of righteousness, and had faithfully discharged his duty, in that capacity. But there is a time for all things: a time to speak boldly, and a time to suffer patiently; a time to testify to the truth with our lips, and a time to prove the force of true religion by our conduct. Let the example of Job warn us against indulging in a disposition to wish any thing otherwise than as God orders it. When He summons us to die, it will be time enough for us to say, "Let him not spare." Whilst He requires us to live, however full of trouble our life may be, let us cheerfully admit, it is good for us to be here. And if we must needs wish that God would grant the thing we long for, let us long for nothing upon earth, so much as this, that the will of God Himself may be done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

*Job chargeth his friends with unkindness.*

- 14 To him that is afflicted pity *should be shewed* from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.
- 15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, *and* as the stream of brooks they pass away;
- 16 Which are blackish by reason of the ice, *and* wherein the snow is hid:
- 17 What time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.
- 18 The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish.
- 19 The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them.
- 20 They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed.
- 21 For now ye are nothing; ye see *my* casting down, and are afraid.
- 22 Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance?
- 23 Or, Deliver me from the enemies' hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?
- 24 Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred?
- 25 How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?
- 26 Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, *which are* as wind?
- 27 Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig *a pit* for your friend.
- 28 Now, therefore, be content; look upon me; for *it is* evident unto you if I lie.
- 29 Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness *is* in it.
- 30 Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?

## LECTURE 771.

*Of maintaining a kind feeling with our friends.*

There is much force in the remarks which Job here makes on the behaviour of his friends, who probably were all agreed as to the strain of admonition which Eliphaz adopted; and therefore were all answerable for it. Let us learn from what Job says on this occasion, to be, as the apostle bids us, at once compassionate and courteous. See 1 Pet. 3. 8. To weep with them that weep, must be our rule. And if we have been their friends, when they were prosperous, we must be the more careful to manifest all the tenderness of friendship, in the way in which we behave to them when overtaken by adversity. Consideration for their feelings is of the utmost importance, as a proof of sympathy in their sorrows; and is also of the utmost weight, as a recommendation of any advice we have to give them in their troubles. For though they would do wisely to follow good counsel, however harshly we may urge it, we should certainly do wrong not to temper our zeal with gentleness, not to have a tender care lest we add to the sorrows of our friends, instead of relieving their distresses.

Most painfully true is the picture drawn by Job of such friends



as deal deceitfully; most striking it is as a proof, considering how long ago these words were written, that human nature is in all ages, and under all variety of circumstances, essentially the same. Many are they who crowd about a friend when in prosperity, but are shy of his acquaintance in his reverses. They resemble the stream of brooks in eastern countries, which in winter may run dark with melted snow, but in the summer are speedily dried up, and are sought for by the traveller in vain. So did Job's friends seem now to him as nothing; so did he in his vexation hastily esteem them; and so did they provoke him to esteem them by their own want of consideration. And so are many who are esteemed friends often found to be in reality no friends at all, but only lovers of their own selves. Let us be the more careful not to put our trust in man, not to place our happiness in man's friendship. Let us be the more desirous to secure God for our Friend, to cast all our care on Him, knowing his kind care for us, and on Him to place all our dependence, being well assured of Him, that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

And yet a friend on earth, however little to be depended on as compared with God, is, when faithful and affectionate, one of the chief of earthly blessings, for which God ought to be thanked most heartily. And painful it is to see Job losing the help and comfort, which he might have been deriving from his friends' presence and society, losing all this benefit by complaining, and disputing, and reproving, by justifying himself, and by bringing charges against them. Yet such is the common fruit of our evil tempers. Surrounded as we are with trouble, and thankfully as we ought to use every means of consolation, we often throw away the mutual help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in adversity and in prosperity. We sacrifice for some trifling offence a substantial benefit. We forget neighbourhood, brotherhood, and we even wilfully close our hearts to the endearments of a tie more close than that of brethren, rather than put up with some affront real or imagined, rather than bear to be denied in a fact, worsted in an argument, thwarted in a wish, or humbled in a comparison. But behold, as the Psalmist says, "Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity." Ps. 133. 1. See how many, how precious, are the blessings, which attend on true Christian friendship, and on the maintenance of a kind feeling between friends. And let no misunderstanding rob us of the joys of mutual sympathy, mutual affection, mutual help. With the world, the flesh, and the devil, in league against us, let us at least be in peace and charity with each other. Let all who are of one household, all who are of one family in Christ Jesus, and especially those among them who have been of one heart and mind as friends, watch that no angry word, or unkind act, ever pass between them, to make them feel towards each other, even for a time, as enemies.

*Job excuseth his longing for death.*

- 1 *Is there* not an appointed weaver's shuttle, and are spent  
time to man upon earth? *are not*  
his days also like the days of an without hope.  
hireling? 7 O remember that my life *is*  
wind: mine eye shall no more  
see good.
- 2 As a servant earnestly de- 8 The eye of him that hath  
sireth the shadow, and as an seen me shall see me no *more* :  
hireling looketh for *the reward* :  
of his work : thine eyes *are* upon me, and I  
*am* not.
- 3 So am I made to possess 9 *As* the cloud is consumed  
months of vanity, and wearisome and vanisheth away ; so he that  
nights are appointed to me. goeth down to the grave shall  
come up no *more*.
- 4 When I lie down, I say, 10 He shall return no more to  
When shall I arise, and the night his house, neither shall his place  
be gone? and I am full of toss- know him any *more*.
- 5 My flesh is clothed with 11 Therefore I will not refrain  
worms and clods of dust; my my mouth; I will speak in the  
skin is broken, and become anguish of my spirit; I will  
loathsome. complain in the bitterness of my  
soul.
- 6 My days are swifter than a

## LECTURE 772.

*We ought to be content to live as long as it is God's pleasure.*

The excuse which Job here offers for desiring death, may be paraphrased as follows: Has not every man his appointed time on earth, or, as it is better translated in the margin, his appointed "warfare," his work that he must do, his battle that he must fight, his victory that he must gain; and then his warfare is accomplished? And as a slave or hired servant earnestly desires the shades of evening to put a period to his labour, and to bring him the reward of his work, may not I also be allowed to wish for the end of my protracted sufferings, of my months of vanity, my nights of weariness? So wearisome are my nights, that from the time I lie down, I am longing for the time when I shall get up; so vain my days, so useless to others, so hopeless to myself, that as for any good that comes of them, they swiftly pass away, and leave no trace behind them. Nor can it be otherwise with such a disease as I labour under, my flesh being so full of corruption, that it may be said to be "clothed with worms and clods of dust." Oh consider this my grievous case, ye friends, who seem to think so lightly of my sufferings. Remember that my life is passing fleetly like the wind, and that I have no prospect of any possible enjoyment whilst it lasts. Consider, that though I live, I am already as one dead; you see me, and yet I am not. I can enjoy



no more pleasure; I can do no more good. Why may I not then be allowed to wish to die in reality, to depart as the cloud that "is consumed, and vanisheth away," to go "down to the grave," and "come up no more?"

If this be the meaning of these words of Job, we may consider them as expressing a notion common to most men in the extremity of grief and pain, the notion that there is no use in living any longer, and that death would be, as we often call it, a happy release. "I am weary of my life," said Rebekah, "because of the daughters of Heth, if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" Gen. 27. 46. Here the cause of grief assigned seems comparatively slight, and this proves the words to have been used proverbially; whence we learn, that even in those early times the expression was so common as to have passed into a proverb. In an age much later, we find the same notion thus beautifully expressed in the Apocrypha, "O death, acceptable is thy sentence unto the needy, and unto him whose strength faileth, that is now in the last age, and is vexed with all things, and to him that despaireth, and hath lost patience!" (Ecclus. 41. 2.) But beautiful and natural as these expressions are, we must observe, that unless duly qualified, they are inconsistent with a proper resignation to the will of God. In the Old Testament, even Job himself can teach us better, saying, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Ch. 2. 10. Shall we cling to life as long as it yields us pleasure; but as soon as it yields us pain, then throw back the wondrous gift into the hands of the gracious Giver? No; not unless it be his good will and pleasure. No; not until He sees fit to call us hence. No; not even though besides a riddance from our troubles, we expect to find in death an entrance into heavenly joy. "To me to live is Christ," says the apostle in the New Testament, "to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But though he felt that "to depart and be with Christ," would be, as he says, "far better," Phil. 1. 21, 23, he does not thereupon complain of the continuance of his life, nor wish impatiently for death; no, not though he was then in bonds, and exposed to all the malice of his enemies. Neither must we in any case so wish for death, as not to be content to live; nor must we doubt that it is good for us here to suffer for a time, and for a long time too, if God so orders it. Nothing should so much make death welcome, as the thought that it is God's will for us to die. And as long as it is his pleasure that we live, we must be ready to say, Welcome life, though it bring only pain and grief, disease and poverty, "months of vanity," and "wearisome nights;" yet because it is God's appointment, and as long as it is his appointment, thank God that we are still alive!



*Job reneweth his complaint, but admitteth his sinfulness.*

12 *Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?*

13 *When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint;*

14 *Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions:*

15 *So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.*

16 *I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity.*

17 *What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him?*

18 *And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?*

19 *How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?*

20 *I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?*

21 *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.*

### LECTURE 773.

*How thankful we ought to be to God for trying us.*

Job seems to have considered, that in the appeal made to his friends, in the first part of this chapter, he had justified the tone of complaint in which he had indulged towards God. Now therefore he turns his words once more towards the almighty Author of his being, and with such reasons as seemed to him sufficient, urges his earnest wish, that God would please to put an end at once to his sufferings, and to his life. "Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" He felt himself hemmed in by adversity, and bound down by a power strong enough to deal with the waves of the ocean, or with the most mighty of its inhabitants. "When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." He found no rest even in sleep, that repose so welcome to the weary; but which in sickness is not unfrequently disturbed by dreams of a most painful and agitating nature. These terrific visions Job considered to be sent to him by God; knowing that He is "the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness." Thus has our Church impressively declared in the service for the Visitation of the Sick. And this they who are under the chastisements of God's hand are usually most willing to acknowledge. Oh that we may be no less sensible of this truth, whilst we enjoy the many comforts which He gives us. When we have the vigour of youth

and health, let us remember that it is God who girds us with strength. See Ps. 18. 32. When we lay us down in peace, and sleep, let us never forget, that it is God, and God alone, who makes us to dwell in safety. See Ps. 4. 8.

And now see how Job, in the tempest of his soul, first loathes his life, and would not live alway; then begs of God to leave him alone, as if he could neither die nor live but by the power of God; then asks how it can be worth the while of so great an One as God, to notice one so insignificant as man, nay, never for one moment to depart from him, not even time enough for him to take breath, or, as the same notion is expressed by a form of speech proverbial in the east, "till I swallow down my spittle." How thankless and murmuring is the spirit here betrayed! But how just and true is the notion, that no single function of life can be performed, by any one of the countless millions of living beings, with which the almighty Maker has replenished the universe, except so far as He upholds us by his power, and departs not from us with his presence! Let us use Job's words devoutly, and they will well express our dependence upon God, as the "preserver of men." It will then well become us to ask in reverent humility, in thankful adoration, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?"

Much more may we marvel at God's grace and condescension, when we consider not only our insignificance, but also our sinfulness; when we say with Job, as we may most truly say, "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?" Alas, there is nothing we can do to God, nothing we can do for God, that can in any measure make amends for past transgression. Richly we deserve, that He should set us as a mark for the shafts of his wrath and indignation, and make us to be a burden to ourselves. And well it is for us that for a time He does so, if thereby we are made sensible of our sinfulness, and earnestly desirous of pardon and forgiveness. This seems to have been in some sort the frame of Job's mind towards the end of this his vehement complaining. This was the train of thought that he was led into; at least so far as that he owned that he had sinned, and desired God to pardon his transgression, before his departure hence, when he would be no more seen. Let this be our first concern, when we think of dying: have our sins been forgiven? However great be the affliction, inclining us to long for death, let us feel how much better it is to live here in trouble, than to die with our sins upon our heads. Let us be thankful to God for visiting us, and proving us yet longer, even by the most severe trials and visitations, if thereby He is graciously preparing us for heaven, leading us through anguish of body, or of mind, to rest and peace and joy for evermore.



*Bildad the Shuhite addresseth Job.*

1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

2 How long wilt thou speak these *things*? and *how long shall* the words of thy mouth *be like* a strong wind?

3 Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?

4 If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression;

5 If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty;

6 If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.

7 Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

8 For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers:

9 (For we are *but of yesterday*, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:)

10 Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?

11 Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water?

12 Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any *other* herb.

13 So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish:

14 Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.

15 He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.

16 He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.

17 His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones.

18 If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee.

19 Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.

20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers:

21 Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.

22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought.

## LECTURE 774.

*Our conviction of God's mercy and justice.*

The argument of Bildad the Shuhite is in the main the same with that of Eliphaz the Temanite. He takes for his general position that God deals with men in this life according to their works. And hence he concludes, that both Job and his children must have sinned grievously against God, or they would not have suffered so severely at his hands. To suppose otherwise would imply, he thinks, as he charges Job with implying, that the Almighty perverts justice. Whereas if Job were pure and upright, God would be sure, he says, to make him prosperous. For the

confirmation of his reasoning he appeals to the wisdom "of the former age;" by which we may understand the opinions of the patriarchal church, as handed down from father to son. The tenour of such opinions, as here set forth by Bildad, is to this effect, that the wicked, though they may flourish for a time, can no more continue in prosperity, than the flag can grow without water, or the spider's web form an enduring means of support. Their branches may shoot forth luxuriantly, and their roots strike deep into the earth. But they soon perish and give place to others. Such is sure to be the end of the wicked. Whilst he who serves God with his whole heart, is no less sure to be preserved by the Lord, and to be established by Him in joy.

Now this was the very opinion which rendered Job full of perplexity, at finding himself so marked an object of the divine displeasure. Though he knew himself and owned himself to be a sinner, he could not help to be also well aware, that he had done much to serve God faithfully, that he had not been, as Bildad seemed to think, a profane or ungodly person. And his great difficulty, the great difficulty which for ages troubled all the wisest and the best of men, was to reconcile the acknowledged truth of God's unerring justice, with the undeniable fact, that those who serve Him faithfully do notwithstanding often suffer severely. This was the question that pressed constantly on the mind of Job. This is the question which throughout this book is canvassed in various points of view; and on which this book served to throw no small amount of light, for the edification of those who lived under the Law of Moses.

Considering that according to that Law there was a positive pledge given on the part of God, that He would requite good and evil conduct, by temporal prosperity and adversity, it was doubly necessary to guard the minds of his people against hastily mistaking any measure of affliction, for a violation of this pledge. And the book of Job would always serve the devout Jew for a proof, that God was faithful to his promises, by teaching him to wait with patience, and see the end of the Lord; who even in this present life abundantly made up for Job's affliction. At the same time this book would help to direct attention to that promised redemption from all evil, from all sin and suffering, that future judgment, that future life, which was to be, as Christians know, the true key to every seeming difficulty in the present state of things. We know, with the most infallible certainty, that our "redeemer liveth." Ch. 19. 25. We know that He has died to redeem us. We know that He will judge the world in righteousness. The life and immortality which He has brought to light, outweigh beyond all comparison our present momentary affliction. And it is by looking, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, that we rest assured, under any circumstances, that God is in all his dealings at once merciful and just.



*Job acknowledgeth the power and justice of God.*

- 1 Then Job answered and said,  
 2 I know *it is* so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?  
 3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.  
 4 *He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened *himself* against him, and hath prospered?  
 5 Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger.  
 6 Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.  
 7 Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars.  
 8 Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.  
 9 Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.  
 10 Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.
- 11 Lo, he goeth by me, and I see *him* not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.  
 12 Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?  
 13 *If* God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.  
 14 How much less shall I answer him, *and* choose out my words *to reason* with him?  
 15 Whom, though I were righteous, *yet* would I not answer, *but* I would make supplication to my Judge.  
 16 If I had called, and he had answered me; *yet* would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.  
 17 For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.  
 18 He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness.  
 19 If *I speak* of strength, lo, *he is* strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time *to plead*?

## LECTURE 775.

*God's power and justice demand resignation on our part.*

Job begins his reply to Bildad with assenting to his general position, that God favours the righteous, and sets his face against the wicked. "I know it is so of a truth," he says. But then he adds, "how should man be just with God?" And in these words we may understand him to argue, that if such perfect righteousness as his friends seem to suppose, were requisite, in order to enjoy God's favour, then no man could stand in his sight. There may be, and there is, a very great difference between one man and another, in point of faithfulness and zeal. But as to contending with God, and claiming happiness as the reward due to our obedience, the best of men would not be able to clear themselves of sin in God's sight, for one thing in a thousand. Hence Job proceeds to speak of God's great power; justly viewing it as a weighty argument to humble man; and saying much that is not unlike to that which was afterwards spoken by



the Lord Himself, when He answered Job out of the whirlwind. But whilst he could speak thus justly in reply to Bildad, he was not yet able to see how forcibly his argument applied to his own case; or he would not have given way again, as he did soon afterwards, to the temptation to murmur against God.

Let us however be thankful for the lessons of divine truth, which Job here powerfully teaches us; however reluctant he was to learn them for himself. Let us consider how hopeless a thing it is to contend against the order of God's providence. Let us weigh well how vain a thing it is to strive or murmur against the will of One, who made the earth, and all the universe, and who, according to his own good will and pleasure, can either maintain them, or destroy them. Many as are the uses of studying God's works, there is no one more profitable to us generally than this, namely, the proof which they are fitted to impress upon our minds of the great power of our Maker. Whether we turn to the firmament of heaven, and look at the sun and moon, and countless stars, with which it is so thickly studded, or whether we confine our attention to this earth on which we dwell, and examine its mountains, its plains, its rivers, its seas, or any one of the many animals or plants, which fill the whole with life, and with activity; when we consider how exactly every thing is made and fitted for its proper use, and endeavour to conceive the most marvellous point of all, that the whole was created by the Lord out of nothing; we are compelled to own with Job, that God "doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." And this great God, the doer of these great things, is a Spirit, ever present; going by us, and we see Him not; passing on, and we perceive Him not. He is the supreme Governor of the world, and of all them that dwell therein; inasmuch that the most high and mighty of mankind "stoop under him." However exalted our station may be, however firmly fixed our prosperity may seem, He can at once bring us to nothing; being not only the Maker of things visible, but also the Author of life to our souls, the God of the spirits of all flesh, in whose hands are our health and strength, our continuance, or our death; our life or death eternal. Such is his boundless power; boundless except so far as He Himself has set it limits, by the exercise of his own equally unbounded goodness. Who then shall dare to say to Him, "What doest thou?" Who shall doubt that all which He sees fit to do is right? Even were we righteous, his greatness would demand that we should not reason with Him, but pray. And even should He vouchsafe to answer to our speech, it would be presumption in us to think, that He had condescended so to do. How much less when we feel that we are sinners, and know that He is no less just than He is great, no less holy than mighty; how much less shall we ever dare to murmur against God, or in any thing make attempt to resist his will?

*Job deploreth the hopelessness of his case.*

- 20 If I justify myself, mine heaviness, and comfort *myself*:  
own mouth shall condemn me: 28 I am afraid of all my sor-  
*if I say, I am perfect*, it shall rows, I know that thou wilt not  
also prove me perverse. hold me innocent.
- 21 *Though I were perfect, yet* 29 *If I be wicked, why then*  
would I not know my soul: I labour I in vain?
- 22 This *is one thing*, therefore 30 If I wash myself with snow  
I said it, He destroyeth the per- water, and make my hands never  
fect and the wicked. so clean;
- 23 If the scourge slay suddenly, 31 Yet shalt thou plunge me  
he will laugh at the trial of the in the ditch, and mine own  
innocent. clothes shall abhor me.
- 24 The earth is given into the 32 For *he is not a man, as I am,*  
hand of the wicked: he covereth *that I should answer him, and*  
the faces of the judges thereof; judgment. we should come together in  
if not, where, *and who is he?*
- 25 Now my days are swifter 33 Neither is there any days-  
than a post: they flee away, they man betwixt us, *that might lay*  
see no good. his hand upon us both.
- 26 They are passed away as 34 Let him take his rod away  
the swift ships: as the eagle *that* from me, and let not his fear  
hasteth to the prey. terrify me:
- 27 If I say, I will forget my 35 *Then* would I speak, and  
complaint, I will leave off my not fear him: but *it is not so*  
with me.

## LECTURE 776.

*Our blessedness in having Jesus for our Mediator.*

How justly applicable to ourselves are these words of Job, viewed as an acknowledgment of our sinfulness, and as an admission that our case is hopeless, except there be found a Mediator between us and God, to turn away his wrathful indignation from us. Our very attempt to justify ourselves convicts us of sin; it is one of the ways in which the pride and perversity of our hearts is most frequently made manifest. And if we were as free from blame as we are apt to suppose, it would be one chief point in our altered character, to be lowly in our own eyes. No wonder, then, that God visits with affliction the righteous as well as the wicked, since none are really righteous in his sight. No wonder that He permits wickedness to flourish for a while at the expense of those who are comparatively innocent. It is for their trial, and their chastisement; and it is therefore for their good. And when we consider how short our time is, how swiftly our days pass away, and are no more, we shall count it but a light thing to suffer wrongfully in this life, so we may be happy in the life which is to come.



But we cannot in reality suffer wrongfully. However little we may deserve ill, at the hands of those, who are made the instruments of inflicting it, we know that God cannot hold us innocent. Our consciences admonish us, that we cannot stand one moment clear before the holy all seeing God. Aware that we are deeply sinful in his sight, we feel that it is lost labour to excuse ourselves, or to complain as if all that we can suffer were not far short of the ill which we deserve. No washing of ourselves can make us clean. Nothing that we can say, nothing that we can do, can remove from us the foul stain even of a single sin, much less of the many acts and words and thoughts of disobedience, with which our memory is loaded. And when we think how great God is, how good, how gracious He has been to us, and then reflect that we, who make such ill returns for all his goodness, are actually his creatures, the work of his hands, bound to do his will in every thing; we know not how to make amends for the past, we see not any thing that we can do beyond our duty for the present, even if we were able to do that; and we find that we have no answer whatsoever to give, to all the charges of wilfulness, unthankfulness, neglect, disobedience, and rebellion, of which we know that we are guilty before God.

When we have done wrong to a fellow creature, and incurred his displeasure, we feel that there is nothing so likely to remove it, as the good offices of a common friend, to plead our cause and to make our peace. Under the weight of such a load of sin as that which is pressing on our minds, estranging us from an offended God, how thankful ought we to be for the prevailing mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour, at once the Son of God and the Son of man! He is the "Daysman," the Mediator, the Reconciler, who his own self bare our sins upon the cross, made atonement for us, and pleads his own most precious blood as the all sufficient price of our forgiveness. The rod is now taken away from us; unless we by renewed provocation expose ourselves afresh to the terrors of the Lord. The fear of God no longer terrifies us, but serves, in conjunction with the love of Him, to render us obedient to his will. We approach Him with the confidence of sons. We dwell nigh to Him in our thoughts and hearts by faith, and enjoy peace, quietness, and assurance for ever. All this we owe to Christ our Saviour, and to his all prevailing mediation. To Him be all the praise and glory. To Him the ever blessed Son of God most high, to Him with the Father and with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, worship, might, majesty, and dominion, for evermore!

*Job reneweth his murmurs under God's dispensation.*

- 1 My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
- 2 I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.
- 3 *Is it* good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?
- 4 Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?
- 5 *Are* thy days as the days of man? *are* thy years as man's days,
- 6 That thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?
- 7 Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and *there is* none that can deliver out of thine hand.
- 8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me.
- 9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?
- 10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?
- 11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.
- 12 Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.
- 13 And these *things* hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that *this is* with thee.
- 14 If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.
- 15 If I be wicked, woe unto me; and *if* I be righteous, *yet* will I not lift up my head. *I am* full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction;
- 16 For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me.
- 17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war *are* against me.
- 18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me?
- 19 I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.
- 20 *Are* not my days few? cease *then*, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,
- 21 Before I go *whence* I shall not return, *even* to the land of darkness and the shadow of death;
- 22 A land of darkness, as darkness *itself*; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and *where* the light *is* as darkness.

## LECTURE 777.

*The light which the Gospel throws upon our present life.*

At the conclusion of the last chapter, Job expresses his conviction, that if there were a daysman, or mediator, between him and God, he might be relieved from his painful sense of the terrors of the Lord. "But," he concludes, "it is not so with me." Here accordingly we find him renewing his complaints,



murmuring under his affliction, and giving utterance to that sore perplexity of mind, as to the justice and wisdom of God's dispensations, from which nothing can relieve us, except the knowledge and belief of our redemption in Christ Jesus. But for this, we should have been as sore distressed as Job, as apt as he to be weary of our life, and to complain in bitterness of soul. But for the light shed on these things by the Gospel, we should have been apt to ask of God, when afflicted by his hand, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." But now we know, that it is not in order to oppress us. Now we know, that instead of despising the work of his hands, He has loved us so greatly as to give his Son to be our Saviour, and that for his sake He makes all things work together for the good of them that love Him. It is because He does not see "as man seeth," and because his years are not "as man's days," therefore it is that He does not spare us for the present, if by any means He may save us for ever. Therefore it is that He contrives, by means of sorrow and sickness, to bring our sin to our remembrance. Therefore it is, that though his hands have made and fashioned us, yet does He allow his own most wondrous work to be marred by disease and death; forwarding hereby his new creation, and preparing us as new creatures, through these fiery trials of our faith, for a life of immortal glory.

Let us then lay to heart how great our gain has been, in having Christ for our Saviour, and in knowing Him, and believing Him to have saved us from sin and death. Let us, with this view, compare these painful thoughts of Job with our own hope full of immortality. "Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity," said Job. My sins are blotted out for Christ's sake, is the conviction of the Christian. "Thou huntest me as a fierce lion," is the thought of the afflicted patriarch. Whilst the Christian, under the like affliction, is privileged to reflect, Thou art seeking me, like a shepherd looking for a lost sheep, Thou art chastening me, like a tender father desiring to reclaim a disobedient child. "Oh that I had given up the ghost," is the wish of Job, when he reverts to the hour of his birth. Thank God, says the Christian, thank God for my creation, and preservation up to this hour; thank God for this present life, by means of which I am prepared for an inheritance of life eternal. And as to death, it seems to Job "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Whilst the Christian views the grave as the passage to a land of light and life, where the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and "every man in his own order;" 1 Cor. 15. 23; a land where the darkness is as light, for there is "no night there," and where the light, inconceivable to mortal sense, can only be prefigured by these wondrous words, "the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. 21. 23; 22. 5.

*Zophar exhorteth and reproveth Job.*

- 1 Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,  
 2 Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?  
 3 Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?  
 4 For thou hast said, My doctrine *is* pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.  
 5 But O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee;  
 6 And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that *they* are double to that which is! know therefore that God exacteth of thee *less* than thine iniquity *deserveth*.  
 7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?  
 8 *It is* as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?  
 9 The measure thereof *is* longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.  
 10 If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?  
 11 For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider *it*?  
 12 For vain man would be wise, though man be born *like* a wild ass's colt.  
 13 If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him;  
 14 If iniquity *be* in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.  
 15 For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear:  
 16 Because thou shalt forget *thy* misery, and remember *it* as waters that pass away:  
 17 And *thine* eyes shall be clearer than the noon day: thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.  
 18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig *about thee*, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety.  
 19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make *thee* afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee.  
 20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope *shall be as* the giving up of the ghost.

## LECTURE 778.

*Of seeking God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

We now come to the speech of Zophar, the Naamathite, the third in order of the three friends of Job, who "had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him." Ch. 2. 11. And we may observe, that he, like the other two, speaks justly, and forcibly, and religiously, except in that which he says personally of Job. There is a severity of reproof in his address to his friend most unsuited to a season of affliction; and implying a disposition to censure others, rather than concern for the honour

of God. And even in regard to God and his dealings, he appears to have fallen into the same error as Eliphaz and Bildad, in stating too broadly and without exception, that none but the wicked suffer affliction at the hand of the Almighty. This is probably the chief point of false doctrine referred to, when it is said, at the end of the book, that these three friends of Job had not spoken of God the thing that is right. See Ch. 42. 7. This is the subject on which we ought to be chiefly on our guard, as we read their animated speeches; remembering that the fact is at variance with this our natural expectation, and that God does many times afflict most severely upon earth those whom He is most manifestly making ripe for heaven.

But with this exception, how striking is the language of Zophar, as to the power, and wisdom, and righteousness of God! And how just is his view of the wretched end of the wicked, as well as of the sure happiness of the good, if interpreted with eternity in view; if we take into our account, what we never ought to leave out, when we are considering the case of an immortal being, if we take into our account the transitory nature of our present tribulation, and the endless ages during which they that serve God truly for the present, will enjoy his exceeding great reward. "Then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot;" how true of them that rise from the grave with their sins blotted out from the remembrance of the Lord! "Yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear;" how applicable to them in whom perfect love has cast out fear, and who have boldness even in the day of judgment! See 1 John 4. 17. "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." How exact and terrible a description of the case of those, who live and die without God in the world, hoping where no hope is, at ease where all is danger infinite, and who arise from the dead only to be at once consigned to the blackness of darkness for ever! Oh that God would therefore now shew us "the secrets of wisdom," and convince us in our hearts "that they are double to that which is;" infinitely to be preferred to those objects of sense, which we are apt to regard as if no other were realities! Oh that we may by searching find out God, seeking the Lord whilst He may be found, calling upon Him whilst He is near; see Isai. 55. 6; seeking God, not by trying to scan the heights of heaven, or to plunge into the secrets of hell, but by the way of his own appointment, the way opened unto us in the Gospel, the way of that righteousness which is by faith, through the merits of Jesus Christ! See Rom. 10. 6.

*Job beginneth to answer his friends scornfully.*

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| <p>1 And Job answered and said,<br/>         2 No doubt but ye <i>are</i> the people, and wisdom shall die with you.<br/>         3 But I have understanding as well as you; I <i>am</i> not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?<br/>         4 I <i>am</i> as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright <i>man</i> is laughed to scorn.<br/>         5 He that is ready to slip with <i>his</i> feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.<br/>         6 The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth <i>abundantly</i>.<br/>         7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee:</p> | <p>8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.<br/>         9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?<br/>         10 In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.<br/>         11 Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?<br/>         12 With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.<br/>         13 With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding.<br/>         14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.<br/>         15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.</p> |
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### LECTURE 779.

*The danger of bitterness in religious controversy.*

We have seen the mistake which Job's friends all made, in beginning with severe reproof, when they ought to have tried to soothe his wounded spirit with words of consolation. In the commencement of Job's answer, we may observe how true it is, that "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water;" Prov. 17. 14; no sooner is a small opening made, than the rushing stream enlarges its course, until at length it bids defiance to all restraint. The harsh words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, provoke Job to use the irritating language of contempt: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Thence he proceeds to tell his friends plainly that he is not inferior to them; and that not only he, but every one, knew all they had been saying as well as they did; "yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" Which was as much as to say, that all their reasoning was of the most common place description, and that it threw no light on the difficulty which agitated his mind; nay, that it amounted to mockery of his affliction. His was a case, he signified, of an upright man laughed to scorn, laughed



to scorn by men, whilst his prayer was heard by God. And such, he added, was the treatment which the afflicted and fallen were apt to meet with, on the part of those who were at ease in their circumstances.

From this strain of cutting reproof, Job next abruptly turns to refute the reasoning of his friends, saying, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly." That is to say, your arguments are all contrary to the obvious fact, that the wicked often prosper in this present world. And this is so obvious, that the beasts of the earth, or fowls of the air, or fishes of the sea, could have told you so. Dull as they are, they can see that this is the case, and also that it is God's doing. For in his hand "is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." So that every thing which takes place on earth is, to say the least, permitted by God. And as surely as the ear tries words, and the mouth tastes meat, as surely as understanding is the result of experience and age, so surely is all wisdom, and all strength, with God; to know all things, and to order all. And therefore whatsoever happens is by his providence; whether it be breaking down that which is strong, or confining that which is free; whether it be destroying by a drought or by a deluge; all is of God's ordering; all is of God's doing; and the difficulty therefore constantly recurs, notwithstanding all you have said to the contrary, the difficult question, whence comes evil in the world, and more especially, how comes it to pass, that evil befalls those amongst mankind, who are comparatively, if not positively, good?

In the tenour of this argument it is painful to observe the same scornful tone prevail, which marks the opening of Job's answer to his friends. But it will be useful to note it, if it should lead us to shrink with lively apprehension from all approaches to that bitterness of temper and speech, which are apt to attend upon religious controversy. It is because we cannot help feeling deeply interested, on these most important of all topics which engage the attention of man's mind, therefore it is that our enemy takes occasion to turn our zeal into wrath, and to substitute passion for patient attention, and to displace the love of truth by the eager desire for victory. Informed of his arts, warned of our danger, and aware how much we lose ourselves, and how greatly we injure the cause of truth, if taken captive in these snares of Satan, let us watch in all our conferences on religious subjects, that whilst we contend earnestly for the truth, we still maintain a calm temper, and a kind and courteous demeanour. Indifference to the truth is as offensive towards God, as bitterness in upholding it is provoking towards man. Let us at once uphold the truth with firmness, and recommend it by gentleness, at once contend for it with zeal, and adorn it with humility.

*Job declareth God to be the Ruler of the world.*

16 With him *is* strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver *are* his.

17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.

18 He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle.

19 He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty.

20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged.

21 He poureth contempt upon

princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.

22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.

23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them *again*.

24 He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness *where there is* no way.

25 They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken *man*.

## LECTURE 780.

*That God overrules all things for good.*

In these words Job pursues the same strain of argument, which he had previously commenced; ascribing to God's providence a complete insight into all things that take place on earth, and a sovereign controul over all. And certainly, whatever difficulty there may be, in reconciling this doctrine with the prevalence of evil in the world, it would ill become us on that account, to hesitate in admitting, that God is the Ruler of the universe, and that all things take place as He would have them. "With him is strength and wisdom;" this is the general position here illustrated. God knows all things. God is able to do all things. God can make all things happen according to his will. And therefore "the deceived and the deceiver are his." Both work for his glory, whether they intend it or not. The evil deeds of evil doers are overruled for good; as likewise the loss and harm of those who suffer wrongfully. Nothing happens without God's permitting it. Nothing can happen otherwise than God has thought fit to permit, for the greatest good of all his creatures, and for the greatest honour and glory to Himself.

This general statement is here applied to a variety of instances, suggested doubtless by the events which were known to have happened in the early times at which this book was written. And as it was true even in the age of Solomon, that "there is nothing new under the sun," Eccles. 1. 9, we shall not be surprised to find that the matters here mentioned by Job, are such as occur, not unfrequently, in our own times. As for instance, they whose

office it is to give counsel to the state, often expose its welfare to disaster. They who have to judge others, act foolishly themselves. Kings are deposed, and led into captivity. Princes are spoiled, and the mighty overthrown. The trusty prove treacherous; and the aged devoid of understanding. The honourable encounter scorn, and the great are overtaken by defeat. The most secret plots are laid open; the most deadly treason is brought to light. Nations are enlarged or minished, exalted or made low. The very mightiest in all the earth are made the meanest and of least account. They that were most enlightened become dark, they that were most firmly established totter and decay. And all this is God's doing. It was so in the time of Job. It is so still. Job was right in ascribing it to God. And we do wrong, if we at all acquiesce in the current notions of the world, that God is One who cares for none of these things; and that if He did care for them, they would be very differently ordered.

It is not for us to say how God could order any thing better than He now does. It is not for us to understand all the ends He has in view, when He allows evil to prosper for a time, or allows it to exist at all. But short as our sight is, and limited our understanding, we can see much in God's government of the world, though we were to look no further than the present life of man, which may convince us that He rules and orders all things on principles of unerring goodness. The nations which are brought low, are those which too highly exalt themselves. The causes which bring nations low, even according to the estimate of such as give no heed to God in their reckonings, are vice and luxury, oppressiveness in the great, and factiousness, or sloth and servility, in the people. The counsellors who are led away spoiled, are usually such as scheme for worldly ends with worldly wisdom. The kings whose bonds are loosed, and their authority set at nought, are oftentimes they who use their power for the indulgence of their own passions, instead of for their people's good. And in the most notable of all modern instances, in a country near neighbour to our own, it was the gross irreligion which prevailed alike in the court and in the church, this it was which gave the handle to infidelity and anarchy, these in their turn introducing the most iron tyranny. And this godless tyranny it was, which was led on by the ambition of universal empire to a most shameful and disastrous fall. Free then may we be to own that the Lord reigneth over all. Glad may we be to think that He is the Governour among the people. And devoutly may we trust in Him, that whatsoever He thinks fit to order in heaven or in earth, is all infinitely good.



*Job rebuketh his friends.*

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| 1 Lo, mine eye hath seen all <i>this</i> , mine ear hath heard and understood it.  | God? and talk deceitfully for him?  |
| 2 What ye know, <i>the same</i> do I know also: I <i>am</i> not inferior unto you. | 8 Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God?   |
| 3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.           | 9 Is it good that he should search you out? or, as one man mocketh another, do ye <i>so</i> mock him? |
| 4 But ye <i>are</i> forgers of lies, ye <i>are</i> all physicians of no value.     | 10 He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons.                                      |
| 5 Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.       | 11 Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?                             |
| 6 Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.                  | 12 Your remembrances <i>are</i> like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.                       |
| 7 Will ye speak wickedly for   | 13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what <i>will</i> .             |

## LECTURE 781.

*The duty of mutual reproof.*

When the thoughts of Job revert to his friends, he gives way to the irritation excited by their speeches, and utters the expressions of ill temper and contempt. "Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. What ye know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior unto you." This is a tone and temper of mind which we must note only to regret that Job indulged in it, only to avoid it ourselves. If we have knowledge, let it be far from us to boast of it. Let us remember the remark of the apostle, "Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth." 1 Cor. 8. 1. If others treat us as their inferiors, let us put in practice the precept of the same inspired writer, that in lowliness of mind each should esteem others better than himself. See Phil. 2. 3. And as to speaking to the Almighty rather than to man, as Job here declares that he wishes to do, adding, "I desire to reason with God," let us remember how great and holy a Being God is, and we shall tremble to speak either to Him or of Him, except in the character of devout suppliants for pardon and for grace, through the intercession of his Son.

But there is a sense in which Job might say all these things, or at least the greater part of them, consistently with a sober judgment of himself, and with a charitable judgment of his friends, and with that reverent apprehension of God which appears to have been the predominant habit of his mind. We may suppose him to mean something like to that which David intended when he said, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for

his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." 2 Sam. 24. 14. Job felt that his friends had put a harsh construction on his case. He was persuaded that they judged wrongfully, and that God would prove a righteous and a merciful Judge. His conscience testified, that though he was indeed far from just in the sight of the Almighty, yet was he also far from being the wilful, gross, and hypocritical sinner, which his friends thought he was; and which they insinuated he must be, for God to have afflicted him so sorely. This he was sure was false. And he was persuaded that this view of God's dealings was derogatory to God's honour; although himself greatly at a loss to find the right view of them, and sorely perplexed to reconcile the fact of his suffering so severely, with his consciousness that he had not been, as compared with others, an offender in proportion. He therefore would fain reason with God, and not with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He charged them with making statements which were not true, and with administering medicine which could not cure. He advised them that silence would be their wisdom, and besought them to hear the pleadings of his lips. He put it to them whether they could be doing right, in speaking for God that which was wrong, taking as it were his side, and defending his cause, at the expense of truth and charity; God knowing all the while the hollowness of their plea, and being aware that they were arguing more for victory than for truth, and were resolved at all events to triumph over their afflicted friend.

The sentence of the Lord against these three friends of Job, at the end of the book, declaring that they had not spoken concerning God the thing that was right, as Job had; this sentence, already referred to, seems to warrant us in putting the above interpretation on their speeches, and in considering that Job was warranted in so interpreting the tenour of their words. And if so, it was his duty to rebuke them, provided he had done it in good temper. For even Christians who in the Gospel learn so fully the abundance of the love of God, and who are so frequently charged to imitate the pattern of that love in their treatment of each other, even Christians are thus instructed by their divine Master: "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." Luke 17. 3. Oftentimes we are tempted to neglect both these duties. We neither faithfully tell our brother of his fault, nor heartily forgive him on his repentance. Let us be aware that this negligence is in both cases the result of self indulgence. Let us be assured that as it is the part of charity to forgive, so is it also the part of charity, if it be done charitably, to rebuke our brother for trespassing against us. Much more is it the fruit of true Christian love, to tell each other plainly of those trespasses, which, whether hurtful to ourselves or not, are manifestly sins against God.

*Job professeth trust in God, but complaineth of his distress.*

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| <p>14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand ?</p> <p>15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him : but I will maintain mine own ways before him.</p> <p>16 He also <i>shall be</i> my salvation : for an hypocrite shall not come before him.</p> <p>17 Hear diligently my speech and my declaration with your ears.</p> <p>18 Behold now, I have ordered <i>my</i> cause ; I know that I shall be justified.</p> <p>19 Who <i>is</i> he <i>that</i> will plead with me ? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.</p> <p>20 Only do not two <i>things</i> unto me ; then will I not hide myself from thee.</p> <p>21 Withdraw thine hand far from me : and let not thy dread make me afraid.</p> | <p>22 Then call thou, and I will answer : or let me speak, and answer thou me.</p> <p>23 How many <i>are</i> mine iniquities and sins ? make me to know my transgression and my sin.</p> <p>24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy ?</p> <p>25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro ? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble ?</p> <p>26 For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.</p> <p>27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths ; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.</p> <p>28 And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth eaten.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 782.

*That we ought to be thankful for affliction.*

We find in this passage a remarkable profession of confidence in God : “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” As long as Job could hold in this mind he was safe. The enemy could gain no advantage of him, beyond some perplexity of mind as to the reasons of God’s afflicting him notwithstanding that his conduct had been acceptable to God. Let us endeavour to learn this lesson of holy trust in God’s ability and willingness to save. Let us endeavour to walk in such ways, as may be approved before Him, in the day when the hope of the hypocrite shall fail. Let us feel assured, that He will be our salvation then, however deeply He may afflict us now. This is what Job probably meant by putting his life in his hand, namely, that he was ready to stake life, to risk it upon God’s faithfulness. He was ready to die, willing to be slain ; and confident, that even after slaying him, God would find means to make it up to him abundantly ; provided his ways were such as could be maintained before God. And this he trusted they could ; however ill his friends might think of them. And this we must trust also, we must have ground for thinking thus ; if we would have reasonable confidence in



God's saving us. For we know that we shall receive according to our works. And therefore unless our conscience bear witness, that our works are such as we may believe to be the fruit of the Spirit, how great must be our presumption to think that God will save us !

But when Job would refer his cause from the judgment of his friends to the judgment of the Lord, he pleaded for two things before the trial should come on ; one, that his sore disease of body, the visitation of God's hand, might be withdrawn ; the other, that he might be relieved from those horrors of mind, which appear to have been a part of his disease. Otherwise he felt, that he should be too weak to stand before God's judgment seat at all. And surely we must plead also for some signal interference of God's power, to strengthen and support our souls, when the day shall come for standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Else how will our spirits faint with terror, on beholding the brightness of his coming ! And how shall we bear to lift up our heads, even though we may have done much, by God's assistance, according to his will, if there be but a single thing in which we have done amiss ; and who is there that must not feel that there are many things ? Thanks be to God for telling us beforehand, that when we shall arise from death to judgment, it will be with bodies glorified, and therefore, as we may humbly hope, with the senses capable of bearing the full light of the divine majesty, and with faculties able to comprehend the full extent of the divine mercy !

But in order to attain unto this state of blessedness, when our great change shall come, it is needful that we should approach as nigh to it as possible during the time of this present life. How thankful then ought we to be, if God, even by the most bitter adversity, makes known to us our transgressions, and leads us to repent of them ! Let us be prepared to praise his holy name, for the very things of which Job was tempted to complain ; if He hide away his face, and seem to treat us as his enemies, and exert his mighty power to subdue the hearts of us his feeble creatures, and bring to our remembrance the sins of our youth, and give us a sense of how grievous a thing it is to be in bondage to iniquity ; that we may be thereby the more vehemently moved to flee from the wrath to come. Welcome affliction, if it make us humble ! Welcome the record of our past iniquities, if the bitter remembrance constrain us to repent, and to amend our lives ! Welcome any dispensation of God's providence on earth, which may tend to fit us for partaking of his glory in heaven ! Welcome any manifestation of the terrors of the Lord, which, making us to stand in awe and sin not, may be the means of God's now keeping us from falling, and hereafter presenting us faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy ! See Jude 24.

*Job describeth man's transitory life on earth.*

1 Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble.

2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee ?

4 Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean ? not one.

5 Seeing his days *are* determined, the number of his months *are* with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass ;

6 Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

7 For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground ;

9 Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.

10 But man dieth, and wasteth away : yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where *is* he ?

11 *As* the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up :

12 So man lieth down, and riseth not : till the heavens *be* no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

## LECTURE 783.

*That we may judge of our future lot by our present state.*

The transitory nature of man's present life, makes Job the more surprised that God should pay such close attention to man, and to man's concerns. Well indeed may we also be surprised, well may we add to wonder thankfulness and love ; to think that the most high God should open his eyes upon such as we are, and should vouchsafe to note all we do against a future judgment. Conceived in sin, brought forth in sorrow, often carried off by death in infancy, in childhood, or in youth, man, even if he live to manhood, has but few years of active usefulness, ere age begins to undermine his strength, and death to advance as one that will not much longer be denied. " Few and evil," said Jacob, " have the days of the years of my life been." Gen. 47. 9. And Job was perhaps alluding to these well known words, when he spake as follows, " Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

Expressive words ; made to us doubly affecting, by their constant occurrence in the solemn service, with which we commit the bodies of departed friends to the ground from which they were taken. Instructive description of our state on earth ; and one which ought to make us deeply feel the vanity of setting our hearts upon those pleasures or possessions, which we can but for so short a season call our own. What ? do we think that here we

have any certainty for the tenure of a single moment? Do we doubt that the future years of life, if for any future years we should be spared, will flee away as rapidly as the past, and that the hour of death will soon be as present to us as the moment that now is? Or do we expect, as it might almost be thought we do, seeing what deep interest we are apt to take in the things of earth, do we expect to rise again in the present world, again to be what we have been once already, again to enjoy what we have already once for all enjoyed? No; there is no such renewed life of man on earth. "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

"Man giveth up the ghost," an event that happens daily amongst us; nay such is the number of men living on the earth, and so many the deaths which continually occur, that there is scarcely a single moment in which some one of our fellow creatures does not breathe his last. "And where is he?" Where are all these millions and millions of active, intelligent, responsible beings? They are not here. They never will be here again. They can have no more to do with all the things about which they have here been busied, with which they have here been interested; but in regard to which they are henceforth as in a deep sleep, having no concern at all in all their past possessions, occupations, and enjoyments; except that they will have to answer for the use of them, when they shall arise from the grave at the world's end. And where are they, as regards that future life? In what degree are they prepared for that resurrection from the dead, which whether it were intended here by Job or not, is obviously suggested by his words to us, who are informed with certainty of life and immortality? Where, in this respect, are they who have died heretofore? Where shall we be when we die? Where, in this respect, are we now? Has it pleased God to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, to renew our hearts, to purify us, and to sanctify us, and to fit us for an eternity of happiness? Has He in mercy dealt with us, as with his own beloved Son, to make us perfect through sufferings? Or has He, in his displeasure, left us to ourselves; and according to the usual wish of our corrupt nature, turned from us, and allowed us to rest, and to accomplish our day as hirelings? Where are we now in these respects? patient in tribulation, or proud in prosperity? labouring to advance in piety, or living at ease in sin? Where are we in such respects as these at present? This will best help us to judge where we shall be, when we shall have given up the ghost.



*Job concludeth his first answer to his three friends.*

13 Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!

14 If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

15 Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

16 For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin?

17 My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity.

18 And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place.

19 The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man.

20 Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.

21 His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.

22 But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

#### LECTURE 784.

*The true use and advantage of earthly blessings.*

Our life in this world once lost is irrecoverable. But we have a life in the world that is to come. This appears to have been the hope upon which Job relied, and which he expressed, though not without some obscurity and doubt, in the words which we are now considering. As to our present life being ir retrievable, it might well strike Job as strange, that a being so active and intelligent as man, endowed with faculties so superior to those of any other of God's creatures here below, and disposed to enter with such lively pleasure into the enjoyment of all the blessings here placed within his reach, should be after a short career so entirely cut off from all his possessions, connexions, and relationships on earth, that "his sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." We also, if we were not so familiar with the fact, should be apt to think this a matter hard to account for. And we might be led by inquiry to account for it on the principle suggested by the words of Job. It is because this life is only a state of preparation for another. It is because the next life is of infinite importance, compared with that which we here occupy for a short season.

As surely as the mountains fall piece by piece, and so gradually decay, as surely as the waters falling drop by drop wear away the hardest rocks, and wash before them whatsoever grows within their reach, so surely does God bring to an end the life of

man, prevail against his strength, cut short his hope of continuance here, and send him away to another place. This is the course of nature, and it cannot be altered; for the course of nature is the ordinance of God. This is the course of nature, and it need not be regretted. For however much we leave behind us when we go, however much we lose or seem to lose by dying, however much of usefulness and enjoyment may seem to be wasted in the world, by the constant departure of its short lived tenants: the truth is, that all is gained which God designs, every object which He has in view is secured, our souls are tried, our faith is proved, our steps are numbered, our sins are noted, our transgressions, yea and also our good works, are written down, and sealed up, and the record safely kept, until the appointed time for which we wait, until our change comes. Then will God call, and we shall answer. Then will God prove that He has not failed to remember the work of his hands. Then will it be seen, that in all the rich abundance of his workmanship, nothing is wasted, in all the wise arrangements of his providence nothing is misplaced; but that life and death, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, earnest expectation and patient waiting, all tend to the manifestation of God's great glory, and to the greatest possible good of all God's creatures.

For our own parts, the lesson to be learnt hence is this: that we ought to value every thing we have here, simply and solely in reference to its use in forwarding us and fitting us for eternity. How greatly ought this thought to moderate our eagerness in pursuing any earthly good! How much ought it to check our grief at the loss of every earthly blessing! How entirely ought it to change the views, with which we are inclined by nature, and encouraged by the world, to use and enjoy whatsoever we now possess! It is good for us to have it, only so far as the possession makes us thankful to God, and enables us to do service to Him, and to do good unto each other. It is good for us to enjoy it, only if the enjoyment turns our thoughts to God's goodness in providing for our pleasure, only if it helps to make us long the more entirely for those far better things which He has prepared for them that love Him. It is good for us to keep whatsoever He now bestows, only so long as He thinks fit to let us, only so far as we can keep it without murmuring when called upon to part with it, only so far as we can be all the while prepared to feel, that when it is taken away it is good for us to lose it. It is good for us to have it, or to be without it, to acquire, or to be deprived; it is good for us to wait here, and it is good for us to depart hence; if we in every case are always watching to obey God's will. It is good for us, because, through God's gracious appointment, it ministers to our endless happiness. It is good for us, because through his wonderful condescension it redounds to his divine glory.

*Eliphaz findeth fault with what Job had said.*

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| <p>1 Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,</p> <p>2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?</p> <p>3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?</p> <p>4 Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.</p> <p>5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.</p> <p>6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; yea, thine own lips testify against thee.</p> <p>7 <i>Art</i> thou the first man <i>that</i> was born? or wast thou made before the hills?</p> <p>8 Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?</p> <p>9 What knowest thou, that we</p> | <p>know not? <i>what</i> understandest thou, which <i>is</i> not in us?</p> <p>10 With us <i>are</i> both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than thy father.</p> <p>11 <i>Are</i> the consolations of God small with thee? <i>is</i> there any secret thing with thee?</p> <p>12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thine eyes wink at,</p> <p>13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest <i>such</i> words go out of thy mouth?</p> <p>14 What <i>is</i> man, that he should be clean? and <i>he which is</i> born of a woman, that he should be righteous?</p> <p>15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.</p> <p>16 How much more abominable and filthy <i>is</i> man, which drinketh iniquity like water?</p> |
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#### LECTURE 785.

*The best method of conciliating the ill tempered.*

Of all Job's trials, none were perhaps more difficult to bear with patience, than the unfavourable construction which his friends persisted in putting on his case. And certainly he had been greatly provoked by their first series of speeches, and he had been led to speak in his reply angrily and scornfully. And now we see the ill effect of Job's hasty words, how they were the means of provoking Eliphaz to speak even more unkindly than before. But how naturally is this the consequence of giving utterance to anger and scorn! How true to our corrupt nature, as it is at present, is this picture of what human nature was, so many hundreds and thousands of years back! With due allowance made for difference of language and of manners, how exactly the same are the passions and infirmities of the human speakers in the book of Job, and those of which we are conscious in ourselves! In all this long interval human nature is not altered. The child of man, now born into the world, has the very same moral nature which the child of man had then. His corruption has not been the growth of ages, the effect of continual degeneracy in successive generations. But it was from the fall of our first parents that we all derived the very same taint of depravity.



And from that time to this we have all of us the same sins besetting us, all of us the same propensity to commit them, all the same need of an entire change of heart, ere we can abhor that which is evil, and love that which is good.

Let us examine then, are our hearts changed in respect to wrath, and strife, and evil speaking? If we are spoken to angrily, can we suppress the rising spirit of vexation, and reply with calmness and good temper? Or do we give way to the impulse of passion; and when we are reproached, answer reproachfully; when reviled, revile again? There are few points of duty, in which we are more frequently tempted to transgress. There are few, if any, in which the happiness of social and domestic life is more constantly put in jeopardy, and seriously affected. And many are the ways of self deceit, by which men are led to allow themselves in anger, and to vex the tempers of each other, consistently, as they suppose, with habits of devotion, and with the maintenance of a religious character. Some by a studied calmness, without kindness, contrive to triumph over those whom they oppose, and whose haste and heat is no further from true charity than the cold and sullen temper with which it is encountered. Some by a quick transition from rage to meekness think to make all smooth at once, and consider that they do no harm by the fury of the moment, or at least not more than they make amends for by the forgiveness which ensues. And some like Eliphaz give vent to the expression of their own wrath, under cover of announcing the declarations of divine truth; and whilst they really say that which is edifying in itself, concerning God's holiness and man's sinfulness, render all their admonition fruitless, by its being evidently intended not to edify but to mortify and condemn; not to glorify God, but to exalt and justify themselves. In approaching a fellow creature whose temper is provoked, and whom we desire to render calm and penitent, sensible of his sin, and desirous to amend, for his own advantage, and for God's glory, the very first thing we have to look to is the state of our own heart, and to watch that no root of bitterness lurks there, no pride or passion seeking for indulgence at the expense of our offending brother. More especially is this necessary, if we ourselves have been the cause of the provocation, whether intentionally or otherwise. First we must with prayer and deep searching of ourselves, attain to an entire calm within, the calm that comes of true affection, not the quieting of passion, but the energy of love. Having this sincere desire to do good for the real motive of what we say, we shall need no study of manner or of words, to give our brother the impression, that our address is not meant to add to his vexation, but to allay his pain. And when we have thus obtained access to his heart, we may safely attempt to plead that word and will of God, to which we prove that we have submitted our own tempers.

*Eliphaz dwelleth on the miserable end of the wicked.*

- 17 I will shew thee, hear me; and that *which* I have seen I will declare;
- 18 Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it:
- 19 Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.
- 20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all *his* days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.
- 21 A dreadful sound *is* in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.
- 22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword.
- 23 He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying*, Where *is it*? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.
- 24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.
- 25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.
- 26 He runneth upon him, *even* on *his* neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers:
- 27 Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on *his* flanks.
- 28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities, *and* in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps.
- 29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth.
- 30 He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.
- 31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence.
- 32 It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green.
- 33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive.
- 34 For the congregation of hypocrites *shall be* desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.
- 35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

## LECTURE 786.

*The hopelessness of being opposed to Almighty God.*

Throughout this whole speech of Eliphaz, we find nearly the same topics dwelt upon, as those which he had at first brought forward. See Ch. 4. 5. He urges as before the perfect holiness of God, and thence argues that his judgments overtake the wicked and the wicked only; implying, that whatsoever Job's character might be with man, he must have been a very grievous sinner in the sight of God. In his former speech he had referred to a vision which he had seen, a vision of a supernatural kind. Now he strengthens his own statements, by the authority of the aged and wise and good, who agreed with him in thinking, that sooner or later the ungodly are sure to come unto destruction. And the men to whom he refers were those, he says, "Unto whom alone

the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them." By which words, we may conceive it intimated, that they were the patriarchs who lived not long after the flood, at a time when the earth was very thinly peopled. And certainly that most awful visitation, the drowning of the whole world of the ungodly, was well fitted to impress those who lived soon afterwards, nay and is also well fitted to impress us, with the conviction, that God will not spare the wicked.

The testimony of these wise men of old is here set forth by Eliphaz in striking language; much of which is certainly very applicable to the destruction which the flood brought upon the ungodly, and all which may be profitably interpreted by us of that misery which God makes to wait on wickedness, usually in this world, and uniformly in the world to come. True it is that the wicked often prosper, in the worldly meaning of the word prosperity. But "in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him;" and in the most strictly true sense of the words "the wicked man travaileth with pain all his days." In the case of any one so daring in iniquity as Eliphaz here describes, there must be ever a secret terror haunting the soul, and embittering all the pleasures of the sense. There must be an apprehension that the day of darkness is nigh at hand; as is indeed very plainly admitted in the favourite maxim of such as these, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." 1 Cor. 15. 32. There must be the pain of apprehension beforehand, or the pain of endeavouring to stifle it. And then there is the painful reality soon to come to pass, when the Almighty, here described as a resistless warrior, shall rush on those who presume to strengthen themselves against Him, and who trust in those good things which He has given them.

And oh the helplessness of man, when overtaken by God! Oh the vanity of man's riches, and of man's strength and length of life, and of all the strength of all the wicked men in all the world combined, as opposed to the might of Him who made all things! Language fails in attempting to express the madness of the thought. No image can sufficiently represent the presumptuous folly, and miserable weakness, of the creature, when daring to resist the will of the Creator. Impunity for a short season may perhaps give them some sense of safety in their wickedness; but it will make their punishment so much the more signal and severe. With Him who created all things for their enemy, what can be their lot at last but unutterable woe? Whatever pain then we may be put to here in serving God, let us calculate within ourselves, that all this pain, and pain much greater than any we feel now, all the pain and shame which we shall be capable of feeling with body and soul fitted for eternity, all this is the sure end of refusing to serve God; all this is the consequence, now threatened, and soon to be fulfilled, in the case of all who having been called unto holiness live an ungodly life.



*Job reneweth his complaint against his friends.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Then Job answered and said,<br/>         2 I have heard many such things : miserable comforters are ye all.<br/>         3 Shall vain words have an end ? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest ?<br/>         4 I also could speak as ye do : if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.<br/>         5 <i>But</i> I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage <i>your grief</i>.<br/>         6 Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged : and <i>though</i> I forbear, what am I eased ?</p> | <p>7 But now he hath made me weary : thou hast made desolate all my company.<br/>         8 And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, <i>which</i> is a witness <i>against me</i> : and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face.<br/>         9 He teareth <i>me</i> in his wrath, who hateth me : he gnasheth upon me with his teeth ; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.<br/>         10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth ; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully ; they have gathered themselves together against me.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 787.

*Against resting satisfied with imaginary well doing.*

It is easy to purpose how well we would behave, if we were in different circumstances from those in which we are. "I would strengthen you with my mouth," says Job, "and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief;" thus he says he would behave to his friends, if he were in their situation, and they in his. He might indeed then triumph over them, as they were triumphing over him: "I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I would heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you." But he is confident that he should do the very reverse. He assures his friends, that in the case supposed, he would do all in his power to comfort them in affliction. It was easy for Job thus to purpose. And no doubt he really meant that which he declared. But it would have been far better to have spoken kindly to his friends, in return for the unkindness which he met with. It would have been far better to have done his duty to the best of his power, as things then were, than to be resolving how well he would do it, if things were as he could imagine them. Instead of doing this, he now reproached his friends as "miserable comforters." He spoke of them as the means of adding to his trouble, as the instruments of the vexation which it pleased God to inflict on him, as enemies gathered together on purpose to give him pain.

Now we cannot say exactly how far Job ought to have known better. For we cannot tell to what degree his mind had been enlightened on the duty of forgiving injuries, and overcoming

evil with good. It was not till God had fully revealed in the Gospel the extent of his love for fallen man, it was not till then that man could be thus forcibly exhorted: "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4. 32. But we have been thus exhorted; we are thus instructed. We have been fully informed of this most amazing instance of God's love towards us, the gift of his own Son to be our Saviour. And we know, that the way in which we are to prove our sense of his marvellous kindness, is to love Him in return, and that the way in which we are to prove that we really love God is to love our brethren. Never then let us be content with imagining how kindly we would act, and how much good we would do, if we had some supposed means and opportunities, other than we have. But with the means we have, and in the opportunities actually presented to us, let us do all the good we can, and shew all the kindness in our power, to every one of our fellow creatures.

It is indeed so much easier to purpose goodness than to be good, there are so many hinderances in the way of every active duty, and so much unthankfulness awaiting our exertions for the welfare of each other, that it is natural for men to shrink from the self denial and diligence of real life, and to resort with eagerness to books, or to other means of entertainment, which represent histories either real or fictitious in an interesting point of view; and which stir the affections of the heart, without any corresponding exercise for the bounty of the hands. And certainly we have a warrant in the many affecting histories contained in God's most holy word, we have a warrant for thinking, that it must be good for us to exercise our sympathy in cases which are beyond the reach of our relief. But the great use of our so doing, is to quicken our affections against the time of action. And the more we take delight in reading what has befallen others, and the more deeply we enter into the wants and sorrows of those whose history we read, we must so much the more watch, lest we become gradually less fitted, instead of more so, for those active duties of benevolence, which ought to form one of the chief sources of our happiness. To endure hardship in doing good, to put up with unthankfulness for good done, and though requited with evil in return for our labour of love, still to persevere in well doing with love unquenched and unabated zeal, this is a point of Christian proficiency, for which we may indeed be prepared by study and meditation, but in which we can only be perfected by practice. And the same is the case in regard to the attainment of all other graces of the Gospel. In order to grow in them, we must be actually exercised in them. And instead of imagining what progress we might make in them, if we were otherwise situated, we must do our duty in that state of life, unto which it has pleased God to call us.



*Job ascribeth his affliction to God.*

11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.

12 I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.

13 His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground.

14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant.

15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust.

16 My face is foul with weeping, and on mine eyelids is the shadow of death;

17 Not for *any* injustice in mine hands: also my prayer *is* pure.

18 O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place.

19 Also now, behold, my witness *is* in heaven, and my record *is* on high.

20 My friends scorn me: *but* mine eye poureth out *tears* unto God.

21 Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man *pleadeth* for his neighbour!

22 When a few years are come, then I shall go the way *whence* I shall not return.

## LECTURE 788.

*The blessedness of being chastised in mercy.*

From complaining of his friends, Job breaks off into a lamentation on his own sad case under the afflicting hand of God; to whom he confidently appeals as a witness of the integrity of his heart, and with whom he had much rather plead his cause, than with his three unkind visitors. Of them it is that he complains, saying, "God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked." And it is to God, as the overruling cause of all, who uses even the ungodly as the instruments of his own holy will and pleasure, it is to God that Job proceeds to refer the weight of his affliction, saying, "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant." In these various and striking figures, Job expresses his conviction, that God was so far the Author of his sufferings, as that without God's commanding or permitting it, they could not have been inflicted. Neither evil disposed men, nor evil spirits, could have had any power at all against him, except it were given them by God.

True as this is of every affliction which befalls us here, it would prove a perplexing truth to the afflicted, if we were not equally well assured that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Heb. 12. 6.



But knowing this, we are enabled to receive God's chastisements as proofs and tokens of his love. However sorely diseased in body, dishonoured in reputation, or distressed in spirits, we cannot but be abundantly comforted by the thought, that each woe is dispensed to us for our good, by One who well knows what is best for us. Only in order for us to have this confidence of hope, we must be able to say with Job, when our "face is foul with weeping," that it is not for any injustice that is in our hands. We must be able to appeal to God "which trieth our hearts," 1 Thess. 2. 4, that also our "prayer is pure." It may be that God is chastening us in his anger, and visiting us in his sore displeasure. It may be so, and we cannot but fear it is so, if our conscience accuses us of purposely committing any sin we know of, and purposing to continue to commit it. As long as we are aware that this is the case, we have no ground for taking to ourselves the consolations of religion. Rather we are proper subjects for the manifestation of the terrors of the Lord.

But do not then all men sin? Was not Job himself a sinner? Must not every one of us admit, that we deserve the worst of chastisement that God sends us? We do deserve it. We are sinners. But we are not all sinners in the same sense and same degree. We are not all wilful sinners, hardened sinners, obstinate sinners. We are not all unbelieving, impenitent, ungodly sinners. We do not all deliberately choose sin as our course of life, and deliberately reject the grace of God, and the commandments of the Lord. This makes all the difference in the true estimate of our spiritual state. Can we appeal to God, who knows the secrets of our hearts, and feel assured that He sees them bent on pleasing Him without reserve? Can we point to our witness which is in heaven, and to the record that is on high, and trust that if the books were opened now, and God Himself were now to publish his unerring sentence on our conduct, there would arise no charge against us, of purposed self indulgence, wilful ignorance, or inexcusable neglect? Much there will be of frailty, many things each day to be repented of, which upon due self examination we feel we might do better, and purpose to do better, and actually do better on the morrow. But for these we apply for pardon, with the confidence of sons, who having been once truly reconciled to their heavenly Father, believe that He is ever ready to forgive. And if this be our condition before God, if we can look forward with hope like this to the day when we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, then may we interpret, without danger of mistake, each sorrow that God sends us in this present life, as a token of the love He feels for us, and an instance of the pains He is taking to fit us for a life of perfect happiness hereafter. To Him be all the glory of the grace we have attained to, to Him be thanks for all the tribulation we are subject to, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*Job lamenteth his misery and mortality.*

1 My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me.

2 *Are there* not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?

3 Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who *is* he that will strike hands with me?

4 For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt *them*.

5 He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail.

6 He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.

7 Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow.

8 Upright *men* shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.

9 The righteous also shall hold

on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

10 But as for you all, do ye return, and come now: for I cannot find *one wise man* among you.

11 My days are past, my purposes are broken off, *even* the thoughts of my heart.

12 They change the night into day: the light *is* short because of darkness.

13 If I wait, the grave *is* mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.

14 I have said to corruption, Thou *art* my father: to the worm, Thou *art* my mother, and my sister.

15 And where *is* now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?

16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when *our* rest together *is* in the dust.

## LECTURE 789.

*How to meet death with joy and thankfulness.*

In this chapter Job continues to lament his miserable condition, one while complaining of his friends, and then bewailing his own misery and mortality. He challenges Eliphaz to strike a bargain with him, not mentioning the terms, but probably meaning to offer something like a wager, that he would prove right, and his friends wrong, in respect to the integrity of his character. He also calls upon his friends to return to a better mind, saying, that he cannot find one wise man among them. He charges them with changing "the night into day," by which he perhaps means, that they called evil good and good evil, that they represented his case as one of no uncommon hardship, whereas he felt it to be a most inscrutable affliction. He describes himself as one hopeless of life, for whom the grave was waiting. He had become, he thought, "a byword of the people." He had "said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." And all this and more had been brought on him by God, when he was conscious to himself that he had served God truly,



and when in fact he had served God so thoroughly, that God had Himself described him as "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." Ch. 1. 8.

This was the great source of Job's perplexity. He knew not how to reconcile the portion he received from God with the duty which he had faithfully discharged towards Him. It was at this that he apprehended the righteous would be astonished. This he thought would make the innocent jealous of the hypocrite. But though it was past his power to account for it, he had no doubt that every thing would be cleared up at the last. And he trusted, that however much it might astonish the good, they would nevertheless stedfastly persevere, and they that had clean hands would grow stronger and stronger. Let us lay to heart the rule here suggested for our practice. And however much we may be astonished or perplexed by any of God's dealings, let us still hold on our way faithful and rejoicing. Let us still add strength to strength, and grow in every Christian grace; knowing that in our heavenly course it is next to impossible to stand still, so that if we are not advancing in holiness of life, it is to be feared that we must be growing less diligent and devout.

Let us then press forward, in spite of every discouragement, arising either from what befalls others, or from what may happen to ourselves. It is indeed a strange and trying sight when we see the righteous in deep affliction. Strange it is and trying to our natural apprehension. And for ourselves it is a trying thing to experience or look forward to the change from prosperity to adversity, from health to sickness, from life to death. So strange and trying is the thought of our mortality, much more the reality of our death, that we have been instructed by the church to pray to God, "Suffer us not in our last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee." (Burial Service.) Let us be aware beforehand that this is likely to prove a passage of great difficulty in our Christian course. Let us endeavour, by frequently reflecting on our mortality, to become familiar with the thought of it; and to say to corruption, "Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." But it will not be enough to reflect on the certainty of death. It will not make the thought of dying any the more welcome, merely to be frequently meditating on the time when the body shall be decaying in the grave. It was the hope of the resurrection, it was faith in Him who died for us and rose from the dead, these were the things which encouraged St. Paul to cry out triumphantly, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" These are the thoughts and feelings which will enable us, throughout our fearful conflict with the last enemy, to lift up oftentimes our voice, and always our heart, to God, with joy, saying, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15. 55, 57.



*Bildad with angry words reneweth his argument.*

- 1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,  
 2 How long *will it be ere ye* make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak.  
 3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts, *and* reputed vile in your sight?  
 4 He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?  
 5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.  
 6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him.  
 7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.  
 8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.  
 9 The gin shall take *him* by the heel, *and* the robber shall prevail against him.  
 10 The snare *is* laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.  
 11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet.  
 12 His strength shall be hun-  
 ger bitten, and destruction *shall be* ready at his side.  
 13 It shall devour the strength of his skin: *even* the first born of death shall devour his strength.  
 14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.  
 15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because *it is* none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.  
 16 His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.  
 17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.  
 18 He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.  
 19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings.  
 20 They that come after *him* shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted.  
 21 Surely such *are* the dwellings of the wicked, and this *is* the place *of him that* knoweth not God.

## LECTURE 790.

*Of waiting for the issue of our conduct until another life.*

In this second address of Bildad, he speaks as one who had taken great offence at Job, for making light of the counsel offered by his friends. He complains that Job had treated the counsel of his friends with no more respect, than if they had been so many creatures devoid of understanding, such as in their passion tear themselves to pieces. A common practice, on the part of those who take offence, to exaggerate, and interpret in an overstrained sense, the expressions at which they are offended. And he considers, that if Job were to have his way, the earth must be forsaken for him, and the rock removed out of his place. That is

to say, he implies, that Job requires things no less unreasonable than these. And this is another usual way of widening the breach, when strife has once begun, for a man to charge his opponent with holding opinions much more extravagant than he does, and to try to fasten on him consequences which he altogether disavows.

After this preface of angry words, Bildad returns to the position, which he and his companions had all along maintained; and describes, in still stronger language than before, the misery, which, as they conceived, God was sure to bring upon the wicked in this present life, and upon the wicked only. All this was plainly aimed at Job; and it amounted to telling him, that unless he owned his guilt and repented of it, he might expect to fare even worse than he had yet fared. Darkness would be his portion, weakness instead of strength, and instead of liberty captivity. He that had counted his friends as beasts, would himself be like one hunted down, driven into a corner, cast into a net, caught in a gin, terrified, famished, the prey of worms, here called "the first born of death," the victim of death, here called "the king of terrors." His tabernacle would be no longer his, but would be tenanted by desolation. He would be cut off root and branch. His memory would perish with him; and his posterity after him. And as to what he had said of upright men being astonished at the afflictions of the righteous, see Ch. 17. 8, it would rather be at the dreadful judgments of the wicked that both they that come after would be astonished, and they that witnessed them would be affrighted.

Allowing for the warmth of passion with which Bildad delivers these sentiments, we may consider them as expressing the general opinion of the patriarchal church, founded on their experience of God's dealings in his providence, and perhaps also on their knowledge of his revealed will. In the earlier ages of the world, it is probable that mankind were dealt with by God, as we treat human beings in their infancy, when they cannot look forward to any distance. The Law, which held out rewards and punishments in this life, is said to have been a schoolmaster to bring the Jews to Christ, see Gal. 3. 24, so perhaps, in the period before the Law, there was a system of divine proceeding suited to a world not yet of age for such a school as that of the Law. And it may have been one great object of the book of Job, when viewed in the issue of the whole argument, to teach mankind to wait longer than they had been used to do, for the reward of their good or evil doings. Let it teach us, who live in these last days, to look chiefly to another life, and to wait patiently for eternity; knowing as we do that the time is short, the day is at hand, and that "God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3. 9.



*Job detaileth his afflictions, as grounds of pity.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Then Job answered and said,           | eth me unto him as <i>one</i> of his     |
| 2 How long will ye vex my               | enemies.                                 |
| soul, and break me in pieces            | 12 His troops come together,             |
| with words?                             | and raise up their way against           |
| 3 These ten times have ye re-           | me, and encamp round about my            |
| proached me: ye are not ashamed         | tabernacle.                              |
| <i>that</i> ye make yourselves strange  | 13 He hath put my brethren far           |
| to me.                                  | from me, and mine acquaintance           |
| 4 And be it indeed <i>that</i> I have   | are verily estranged from me.            |
| erred, mine error remaineth             | 14 My kinsfolk have failed, and          |
| with myself.                            | my familiar friends have forgot-         |
| 5 If indeed ye will magnify             | ten me.                                  |
| <i>yourselves</i> against me, and plead | 15 They that dwell in mine               |
| against me my reproach:                 | house, and my maids, count me            |
| 6 Know now that God hath                | for a stranger: I am an alien in         |
| overthrown me, and hath com-            | their sight.                             |
| passed me with his net.                 | 16 I called my servant, and he           |
| 7 Behold, I cry out of wrong,           | gave <i>me</i> no answer; I entreated    |
| but I am not heard: I cry aloud,        | him with my mouth.                       |
| but <i>there is</i> no judgment.        | 17 My breath is strange to my            |
| 8 He hath fenced up my way              | wife, though I entreated for the         |
| that I cannot pass, and he hath         | children's <i>sake</i> of mine own body. |
| set darkness in my paths.               | 18 Yea, young children de-               |
| 9 He hath stripped me of my             | spised me; I arose, and they             |
| glory, and taken the crown <i>from</i>  | spake against me.                        |
| my head.                                | 19 All my inward friends ab-             |
| 10 He hath destroyed me on              | horred me: and they whom I               |
| every side, and I am gone: and          | loved are turned against me.             |
| mine hope hath he removed               | 20 My bone cleaveth to my                |
| like a tree.                            | skin and to my flesh, and I am           |
| 11 He hath also kindled his             | escaped with the skin of my              |
| wrath against me, and he count-         | teeth.                                   |

## LECTURE 791.

*Of sympathy with sinners in their sufferings.*

Job, in this reply to Bildad's second speech, complains as before of the conduct of his friends; and pleads his many and grievous afflictions, as reasons for them to pity him, rather than reproach him. Supposing that he had been guilty of all the wickedness with which they thought fit to charge him, still, he observes, the consequences, as they regarded them, were so bitter, that he was fully entitled to their sympathy. The power of the Almighty had overtaken him. He was distressed in mind by doubt and perplexity as to the true cause of his affliction, and he had in



vain sought for satisfaction. All his worldly greatness had been brought to nothing. All the ministers of God's wrath, as want and disease, and the death of dearest relations, appeared to be arrayed against him. His kinsfolk, his acquaintance, and his most intimate friends, had deserted and forgotten him. The inmates of his house, his own servants, had treated him as a stranger, and turned a deaf ear to his requests. Even his wife had behaved as though his breath were strange to her, and that, when he appealed to her by this strong bond of wedded love, their common offspring. And whilst both young and old, including his very nearest and dearest friends, had thus turned against him, he had been also suffering the pains of a loathsome disease, barely escaping with his life.

Well might Job plead these things as arguments for sympathy on the part of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; even supposing that all their suspicions against him had been founded on truth. Well might he appeal to them in these affecting words, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." Ver. 21. And well may we hence be led to reflect, that the sufferings, which we frequently see to follow, even in this present life, on the commission of sin, are grounds on which we ought to compassionate the sufferer, however richly he may have deserved to suffer. Whatever may be the triumphant joy, with which we shall be enabled in another life to regard God's righteous judgments upon sinners, and however this may be compatible, as it doubtless will be, with the love then perfected in the saints; our present office rather is to have compassion on those, who are overtaken with the consequences of their own misconduct. When the righteous are afflicted, this is indeed a call for more than common concern. And they who would fain glorify their Saviour Christ, will on such occasions take the utmost pains to comfort those, whom they believe to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. But however far the sufferer be from righteous, still if he be afflicted, we ought to pity him. And it is in any case his affliction, which we may be sure of, rather than his righteousness, in respect to which we may be mistaken, it is his affliction that renders him the proper object of our compassionate regard. Happy they, who have learnt from the bright example set us by our Lord, to weep with them that weep! Happy they, who, however eminent in piety themselves, instead of judging their brethren when suffering for sin, or harshly reproaching them with their sinfulness, come forward to administer in their sorrows the balm of unaffected sympathy, as men who feel that but for God's gracious help they might have fallen in like manner, and that but for their Saviour's death they must have suffered infinitely worse to all eternity!

*Job declareth his trust in a Redeemer.*

- 21 Have pity upon me, have the earth:  
 pity upon me, O ye my friends;  
 for the hand of God hath touched  
 me.
- 22 Why do ye persecute me as  
 God, and are not satisfied with  
 my flesh?
- 23 Oh that my words were now  
 written! oh that they were  
 printed in a book!
- 24 That they were graven with  
 an iron pen and lead in the rock  
 for ever!
- 25 For I know *that* my re-  
 deemer liveth, and *that* he shall  
 stand at the latter *day* upon
- 26 And *though*, after my skin  
*worms* destroy this *body*, yet in  
 my flesh shall I see God:
- 27 Whom I shall see for my-  
 self, and mine eyes shall behold,  
 and not another; *though* my reins  
 be consumed within me.
- 28 But ye should say, Why  
 persecute we him, seeing the  
 root of the matter is found in  
 me?
- 29 Be ye afraid of the sword:  
 for wrath *bringeth* the punish-  
 ments of the sword, that ye may  
 know *there is* a judgment.

## LECTURE 792.

*The hope of final redemption our best comfort in trouble.*

In the former part of this chapter, Job has at some length set forth his various afflictions, as grounds on which he now appeals to his friends to pity him. And after earnestly pleading for their kind compassion, he asks them reproachfully what reason they could have to persecute him, and to take upon themselves to afflict him, as though they were in the place of God, and as if they were not satisfied with the things which he was already suffering in the flesh. Instead of pitying him as they ought, he implies, they were actually adding to his troubles. They were acting as his enemies rather than as his friends. And it was perhaps the thought of this their enmity, that led him to speak of that Redeemer or Avenger, whom he now declares that he confidently expected to arise and take his part. And this confident expectation he expresses in terms so far beyond man's wisdom to devise, and introduces with a wish so plainly descriptive of its infinite importance, that we can scarcely doubt that here we have Job speaking not of the will of man, but as he was moved by the Holy Spirit of God.

"Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book!" Imprinted, or impressed, he means, by some of the methods then in use for fixing in the most lasting manner that which was written. "That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" Perhaps alluding to a practice of filling up the letters, with melted lead, when engraved by iron tools. "For I know that my redeemer liveth;" using a word which means literally the next of kin, and meaning, one who will



discharge the offices of the next of kin, the avenging me of my enemies, and delivering me from my troubles, and purchasing me out of my captivity. See Num. 35. 12. 19; Lev. 25. 25. 49. "And that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Though now alive, He is not now visible in the flesh on earth, as assuredly He shall be hereafter; once when He comes to suffer death, once more when He comes again to judge the world. "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He shall deliver me from all my enemies, even from the power of that last enemy death; insomuch that this my body, worn out as it is with disease, shall be renewed in immortal life, and shall be made the means, in a glorified state, of my seeing and enjoying God. "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Low as I am reduced by sickness, and nigh as I am to death, yea, and however long time after death this mortal body may lie in the grave and moulder in corruption, yet shall I hereafter see God with my own eyes; such great things will my Redeemer do for me. How much less then ought ye my friends to think of vexing me, seeing that I am so strongly rooted in this hope of a Redeemer! How much more ought ye to be afraid of provoking his wrath, by your unjust treatment of one who believes in Him, when ye consider that He is coming to judge all mankind!

There may perhaps be room to doubt whether Job, when he used the words before us, was able to attach to them so clear and full a meaning as we have now supposed; even granting that he was directed in the use of them by inspiration of God. But it is our privilege to apply to our instruction the things written in the Old Testament, with all the help which the Gospel gives us in the interpretation thereof. Here therefore let us lift up our thoughts to the hope of life eternal, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as our chief resource for peace, and joy, and confidence, under whatsoever troubles and trials overtake us. Our flesh may be the seat of excruciating pain; our spirits may be distressed by the unkindness of friends, or by the persecution of enemies. But what of these things, if the root of the matter be found in us? What of these things if we be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is by faith in Him; and if He be sure to come, ere long, as Judge of quick and dead, and we have good reason to believe that He will then prove our everlasting Friend? What matters it that we die now, if then we shall be raised up to life? What matters it, that now we are afflicted, if then we shall rejoice for ever and ever?

Grant, Lord, to us that lively faith, which is the evidence of things unseen! Grant that we may thereby see and know, that He who once died for us on the cross, is now alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death! See Rev. 1. 18.



*Zophar reneweth his discourse on the end of the ungodly.*

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| <p>1 Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,</p> <p>2 Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for <i>this</i> I make haste.</p> <p>3 I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.</p> <p>4 Knowest thou <i>not</i> this of old, since man was placed upon earth,</p> <p>5 That the triumphing of the wicked <i>is</i> short, and the joy of the hypocrite <i>but</i> for a moment?</p> <p>6 Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds;</p> <p>7 Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where <i>is</i> he?</p> <p>8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.</p> <p>9 The eye also <i>which</i> saw him shall <i>see him</i> no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.</p> <p>10 His children shall seek to</p> | <p>please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods.</p> <p>11 His bones are full <i>of the sin</i> of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.</p> <p>12 Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, <i>though</i> he hide it under his tongue;</p> <p>13 <i>Though</i> he spare it, and forsake it not: but keep it still within his mouth;</p> <p>14 Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, <i>it is</i> the gall of asps within him.</p> <p>15 He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly.</p> <p>16 He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him.</p> <p>17 He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter.</p> <p>18 That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow <i>it</i> down: according to <i>his</i> substance <i>shall</i> the restitution <i>be</i>, and he shall not rejoice <i>therein</i>.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 793.

*The misery of having the will rebellious towards God.*

Zophar begins his answer with stating that he is in haste to speak, because he had heard words which he took for a reproach. And without paying the least attention to Job's affecting plea for pity, he dwells, in the same strain as he had done before, see Ch. 11, on the terrible consequences of wickedness; as one who took it for granted, that Job was to be numbered among the wicked. Little as all this was applicable to the case of Job, we may lay to heart the substance of Zophar's words, as a profitable warning to ourselves, of the miserable end which speedily overtakes all those, who live an ungodly life. Even under the dispensation of the Gospel, which has been the means of bringing life and immortality to light, and which directs our thoughts from present retribution to the day of universal judgment, there

are yet very many instances, in which these fearful words of Zophar are signally fulfilled. So close is the connexion, in the order of God's providence, between doing wickedly and suffering for it! So many are the cases, in which the practices of iniquity bring down on the offender, in the course of nature, their own reward!

But it is when we take eternity into the account, that we can best interpret Zophar's words, and apply them most profitably to our own instruction. In this point of view, how short is the triumphing of the wicked; how momentary the joy of the hypocrite! How speedy is his fall from the height of his prosperity, how soon do they which have seen him flourishing, have to say, with fearful apprehension, "Where is he?" All his greatness, and the wealth in which he trusted, vanish from him like a dream. His children too, on which perhaps he has unduly set his heart, these must leave him, or he leave them, glad if there be any hope, a gloomy hope, that where he is going they may never come. The sins of his youth, not having been repented of, lie down with him in the dust, and arise with him at the resurrection of the dead. Sweet as they seemed at the moment of committing them, they leave behind a savour of deadly bitterness, they inflict a sting never to be cured. All that he has gained wrongfully, God will make him yield up shamefully. And the restitution, not being wrought in him by repentance, but wrung from him by death, shall be matter not of joy but grief.

It is one of the results of godly sorrow, according to St. Paul's account of it, that it works in us a degree of indignation against sin, and a disposition to mortify its power, which is worthy to be called "revenge." 2 Cor. 7. 11. This notion includes of necessity the restitution or restoring of that whereinsoever we have wronged one another, as far as we are able to restore it. And such restitution becomes a source of pleasure to the heart once truly changed, which now delights in doing God's commandments. And so it is in every other duty, the subduing and conforming our own will to that which God commands, makes every commandment welcome, every thing we have to do a cause of joy and thankfulness. Whilst this is the envenomed sting that rankles in the heart of the ungodly, this rebellion of their will, this insubordination to the will of God, and this being compelled by force at the last to render unto Him, in groans from hell, that glory, which they refuse to give Him willingly, by songs of praise in heaven.

*Zophar declareth the end of the oppressor.*

- 19 Because he hath oppressed *and* hath forsaken the poor; *because* he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not;
- 20 Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired.
- 21 There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods.
- 22 In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.
- 23 *When* he is about to fill his belly, *God* shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating.
- 24 He shall flee from the iron
- weapon, *and* the bow of steel shall strike him through.
- 25 It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors *are* upon him.
- 26 All darkness *shall be* hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.
- 27 The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him.
- 28 The increase of his house shall depart, *and his goods* shall flow away in the day of his wrath.
- 29 *This is* the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.

## LECTURE 794.

*Against the abuse of riches and authority.*

It is painful to observe, in this passage, clear proof of the great extent to which the oppression of the weak by the powerful prevailed in very early times. Some men have indeed ignorantly supposed, that in the early ages of the human race, all men were equal in riches, rank, and power. But it is obvious to reason, that the natural inequality amongst men in strength of body or of mind must soon have led to difference in station; even if such difference had not arisen, by God's ordinance, from the natural relationships of father and child, of brother and sister, of husband and wife. Out of these relationships, together with the respect naturally paid to the first born among brethren, and the sense of property, and the rights of inheritance, it appears that the frame and order of society grew up as fast as the growing numbers of mankind, of society like to that which has ever since prevailed amongst all the nations of the earth. And in such society, it has undoubtedly always been the will of God, that while the poor should be contented, the rich should be poor in spirit, whilst they who are under authority should be subject for conscience sake, they who are in authority should rule for the same conscience sake, with a single eye to the benefit of those, over whom it has pleased God to make them rulers.



But see how grossly such authority was abused as early as the times of Job! See how plainly Zophar could describe the case of those who oppress and forsake the poor; who violently take away that which they have not built; who, being rich and increased with goods, are apt to trust in their wealth as a sufficiency, and are encouraged thereby to live without God in the world! This is a fearful case, as described by Zophar. And, alas! it is no uncommon case, even in Christian times and countries. It is not more uncommon for the great to be oppressive, than for the poor to be discontented. It is not more uncommon for them that are in authority to abuse their power, and to rule with a view to gaining their own ends, than it is for those who are subject to authority to murmur, and resist, and rebel. There are faults in all classes and all ranks. And the word of God spares none; but rather holds up to every one, in every station, the mirror of his own besetting sins; that each may take warning, and escape; may repent, and amend, and lead a new life, that iniquity be not his ruin.

Here then let those who possess riches or power be taught to beware of the temptations which beset them, and watch that they never are prevailed upon to oppress the poor, or to lord it over the weak and helpless. Let such an one remember that his greatness is not his own, but is a talent entrusted to his care; to be used, not for the gratification of his own passions, but for the good of his fellow creatures, to the praise of the glory of God. Let him not say, whatsoever his heart is set upon, I can do this thing, therefore I will; I can purchase this enjoyment, or compel this submission, therefore, whether it be right or wrong, allowable or forbidden, mine it shall be forthwith. Let him be assured, that if this be the temper of his mind, "in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits." Though he should not be disappointed in the attainment of his object, he shall not have satisfaction in possessing it. Or however much he may enjoy the possession, he shall not be able to keep it long. Whether he be harassed with remorse, or have his conscience lulled in fatal slumber, in either case his sin will find him out; and for whatsoever wrong he inflicts upon his brethren, or dishonour he offers unto God, retribution is at hand. Death with "the iron weapon," and "the bow of steel," will prove too strong for the strongest. Then will follow horrors indescribable; sometimes called "outer darkness," Matt. 22. 13; sometimes "everlasting burnings;" Is. 33. 14. Or to use the words of Zophar, "all darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown," that is to say, not kindled by man, "shall consume him." Or to apply the corresponding language of Isaiah, "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Is. 30. 33.

*Job maintaineth that the wicked do sometimes prosper.*

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| 1 But Job answered and said,              | of the organ.                            |
| 2 Hear diligently my speech,              | 13 They spend their days in              |
| and let this be your consolations.        | wealth, and in a moment go               |
| 3 Suffer me that I may speak;             | down to the grave.                       |
| and after that I have spoken,             | 14 Therefore they say unto God,          |
| mock on.                                  | Depart from us; for we desire            |
| 4 As for me, <i>is</i> my complaint       | not the knowledge of thy ways.           |
| to man? and if <i>it were so</i> , why    | 15 What <i>is</i> the Almighty, that     |
| should not my spirit be troubled?         | we should serve him? and what            |
| 5 Mark me, and be astonished,             | profit should we have, if we             |
| and lay <i>your</i> hand upon <i>your</i> | pray unto him?                           |
| mouth.                                    | 16 Lo, their good <i>is</i> not in their |
| 6 Even when I remember I                  | hand: the counsel of the wicked          |
| am afraid, and trembling taketh           | is far from me.                          |
| hold on my flesh.                         | 17 How oft is the candle of              |
| 7 Wherefore do the wicked                 | the wicked put out? and <i>how</i>       |
| live, become old, yea, are mighty         | <i>oft</i> cometh their destruction      |
| in power?                                 | upon them? <i>God</i> distributeth       |
| 8 Their seed is established in            | sorrows in his anger.                    |
| their sight with them, and their          | 18 They are as stubble before            |
| offspring before their eyes.              | the wind, and as chaff that the          |
| 9 Their houses <i>are</i> safe from       | storm carrieth away.                     |
| fear, neither <i>is</i> the rod of God    | 19 God layeth up his iniquity            |
| upon them.                                | for his children: he rewardeth           |
| 10 Their bull gendereth, and              | him, and he shall know <i>it</i> .       |
| faileth not; their cow calveth,           | 20 His eyes shall see his de-            |
| and casteth not her calf.                 | struction, and he shall drink of         |
| 11 They send forth their little           | the wrath of the Almighty.               |
| ones like a flock, and their chil-        | 21 For what pleasure <i>hath</i> he      |
| dren dance.                               | in his house after him, when             |
| 12 They take the timbrel and              | the number of his months is cut          |
| harp, and rejoice at the sound            | off in the midst?                        |

#### LECTURE 795.

*Of looking not to the things of time but to those of eternity.*

There is but little asperity in this reply of Job, compared with that which he had previously indulged in, under the provocation given him by his friends. With a deep sense of the difficulty of the subject on which he was entering, he maintains, in contradiction to the tenour of their argument, that the wicked do not uniformly suffer in this present life. He admits indeed that they do suffer frequently; not however without many exceptions, sufficient to overthrow the conclusion of his friends, that because he suffered, therefore he must be a wicked man. Many times, he declares, the wicked attain to length of days and eminence of power. They live to see their children grow up and flourish. They have neither affliction nor the dread of it. They prosper

in their flocks and herds, the increase of which was the chief source of wealth among the patriarchs. They prosper in the numbers of their children; and, together with their families, they spend their days in ease and entertainment, until the time of their going down to the grave. "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"

A most faithful description this of the thoughts of the ungodly! A most true and awful account of language which may even now be heard from many presumptuous lips, of feelings which even now are harboured in many unconverted hearts! Many had rather have nothing at all to do with God, as long as they can help it. They drive away as far as possible all thought of Him. They shrink from all mention of his name. They take no pains to know his ways. They do no acts with a view to serving Him. And they never really pray to Him at all. That God should allow such men to live at all, much more to live and prosper, is indeed a thing strange to reflect upon. And well may we with Job be afraid when we remember it, well may trembling take hold on our flesh. For assuredly "their good is not in their hand;" their prosperity is not dependent on their own will; it is purposely allowed to them by God for his own greater glory. Their impunity for the present betokens all the more sore punishment to overtake them in the end. Their safety for a time, not being improved as a season of repentance, hardens them in sin, confirms them in ungodliness, and seals them unto endless perdition.

But Job would not have his friends lay hold on what he said, as if he thought that the wicked always thus fared well; whence they would have been apt to charge him with giving the preference to evil courses. He therefore testifies, that oftentimes their light is extinguished, and their destruction overtakes them in the midst of their prosperity; God distributing sorrows in his anger. Then they become "as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away." Their iniquity is also visited on their children, and they are made to feel and know that they suffer for their sins. They see the sad sight of their own calamity, and drink the dregs of the cup of the divine displeasure. And they are cut off in the midst of their enjoyments here, as well as reserved for the judgment of hereafter. But what comparison is there between the two? What a mere earnest of eternal misery is the worst that can befall the wicked now! Oh, let us ever keep our thoughts fixed upon eternity; and let us direct our hopes and fears, whether for ourselves or for our brethren, not to the things seen, but to those which are unseen; not towards prosperity or adversity on earth, but to the everlasting joys of heaven, and to the endless torments of hell!



*Job accounteth for the prosperity of the wicked.*

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| <p>22 Shall <i>any</i> teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high.</p> <p>23 One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.</p> <p>24 His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow.</p> <p>25 And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.</p> <p>26 They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.</p> <p>27 Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices <i>which</i> ye wrongfully imagine against me.</p> <p>28 For ye say, Where <i>is</i> the house of the prince? and where <i>are</i> the dwelling places of the wicked?</p> | <p>29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens,</p> <p>30 That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.</p> <p>31 Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him <i>what</i> he hath done?</p> <p>32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.</p> <p>33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as <i>there are</i> innumerable before him.</p> <p>34 How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?</p> |
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#### LECTURE 796.

*The wicked are reserved for future judgment.*

That Almighty God knows all things, is a consideration closely connected with the certainty that He governs all things. And it appears to have been by connecting these two doctrines in his mind, and holding fast to the conviction of their truth, that Job began to see some light in the perplexity surrounding him; at least sufficient to save him from assenting to the mistaken notions of his friends. "Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high." This means that He must know what is best; and that He governs high and low, rich and poor, good and evil; insomuch that nothing happens but as He thinks fit. All therefore must be ordered for the best by God; however hard it may be for man to reconcile the things which God allows, with the holiness, and justice, and goodness, which are essentially his. All must be ordered for the best, though many things are ordered otherwise than as man would suppose right; as for instance, though one man may fare well and another ill, both having as far as we can see deserved alike; "one dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet;" "and another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure." And again, all, whether good or evil, return alike to the dust from which they were taken; all alike become the food of worms.

Job knew that these things were true, that there was, in point of fact, no sure, uniform, and full retribution of good and evil in this present life; however near an approach God might be

pleased to make to it, in the laws of our nature, or in the dispensations of his providence. And Job would have his friends to know, that he understood their devices in obstinately maintaining the contrary opinion. He knew that they designed to argue from his being a great sufferer to his being a great sinner; which would evidently follow on his granting them, that none except the very wicked are heavily afflicted, and that they always are. It was for this that they said, "Where is the house of the prince? and where are the dwelling places of the wicked?" They pointed to Job's desolate house, as proof beyond dispute, that he must be numbered with the ungodly. Whereas they might have learnt, he tells them, by asking of any traveller on the road, that the dwelling places of the wicked were often well established, and were seen to flourish for a length of time. Nay, he signifies, at the end of his speech, that they knew all this themselves, and knowingly were speaking that which was not true.

The fact was notorious, that oftentimes the ungodly might be seen to flourish. And the true account of this, Job seems to think, was equally well known, namely, "that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." High they may be, and haughty, and above being rebuked for their offences, and supposing themselves above being brought to judgment for them. They may die as much at ease as they have lived; and may be brought to the grave, and remain in the tomb as peaceably and as honourably, to all outward seeming, as if they had lived a godly life. The earth may rest as light on their remains, and the clods of the valley may be as sweet to mingle with their dust. And as thousands have run the like course before them, so there may be nothing seen in their earthly end to deter thousands from taking the same course after them. But for all this, they are reserved to the day of destruction. They have but been heaping up for themselves wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. See Rom. 2. 5. Let us not then be deceived by the calmness, and seeming peace, with which the wicked often breathe their last, or by the honours which are often paid to their remains or their memory, those last tokens of respect that man can give to man. All this may be theirs when life ends, as well as all prosperity while life lasts; and yet all may be only a dream of pleasure, from which they must awake to an eternity of pain. Peace they say unto themselves, when there is no peace; for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Is. 57. 21. Honour they have received one of another. But God is about to put them to shame. And when the gilded sepulchres of the rich and the renowned shall give up their dead, the sentence awarded to many of their owners will fearfully fulfil these words of Christ, "That which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16. 15.

*Eliphaz speaketh for the third time.*

- 1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,  
 2 Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?  
 3 *Is it* any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or *is it* gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?  
 4 Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?  
 5 *Is not* thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?  
 6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing.  
 7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.  
 8 But *as for* the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it.  
 9 Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken:  
 10 Therefore snares *are* round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee;  
 11 Or darkness, *that* thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee.  
 12 *Is not* God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!  
 13 And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?  
 14 Thick clouds *are* a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.  
 15 Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?  
 16 Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overthrown with a flood:  
 17 Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?  
 18 Yet he filled their houses with good *things*: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.  
 19 The righteous see *it*, and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn.  
 20 Whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

## LECTURE 797.

*Against speaking vexatiously to those with whom we differ.*

Eliphaz now once more begins to speak, for the third time. And as before, he says much that is unkind towards Job, and with it much that is sound doctrine, and wholesome counsel, either for Job, or for us. First he urges an important truth, namely, that our obedience and holiness of life cannot really be of any advantage to God; cannot be a source of profit or pleasure, in the sense in which we commonly apply these words to our own gains and joys. Neither can it be through fear of losing any such benefit, that God reproves us when we sin. All this is strictly true. And it is truth highly important for us to remember; because we are very apt to conceive irreverently of God, as if He were One like ourselves, dependent on other beings for the perfecting of his happiness and glory. The language in which He graciously condescends to our feeble appre-



hensions, and represents Himself in his word as caring for us, seeking us, loving us, longing for the affection of our hearts, and for the devotion of our lives, these expressions are liable to be misapprehended by us in the vanity of our minds; as if God were in any wise obliged to us for loving Him and keeping his commandments. And it is doubtless with a view to check in us this false presumption, that our blessed Lord has warned us, "When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17. 10.

In stating this important truth to Job, Eliphaz appears to have implied, that Job felt as if his past righteousness had laid the Lord under a kind of obligation to give him continual prosperity. But fearing perhaps lest he should herein seem to admit that Job had in past time been righteous, he immediately proceeds to lay to his charge several distinct and serious offences; of which if Job had indeed been guilty, it might have been said to him with reason, "Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?" It seems probable, that Eliphaz means to say no more, than that Job must have done some such things as these, and to set before him, by way of convincing him of sin, the offences into which it was most likely that one in his situation would fall. Oppression of the poor, and withholding a due measure of relief from them that need it, these are in all ages among the temptations of the great. And without supposing Job guilty of some such acts as are here specified, Eliphaz could not account for the pains of body, and perplexity of mind, with which he was now afflicted.

As to Job's own declared opinion, that to be heavily afflicted was not always to be taken for a proof of having been a grievous sinner, this his friend thought fit to interpret, as if it were a denial of God's all seeing providence, as if Job had argued, that God dwelt so far off in the heights of heaven, that He could not judge through the intervening distance. And therefore he points to well known instances, in which the ungodly had been signally overtaken by vengeance from the Lord. And in doing so, he takes up Job's own description of the wicked, "which say unto God, Depart from us," as well as Job's protest against fellowship with them, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me." See Ch. 21. 14, 16. Let us observe how objectionable this practice is, how apt to vex and irritate the person, whose words are so taken up by those with whom he is at variance. And let us also beware of charging our opponents with things which they would not admit to be their opinions, however plainly their words seem to us to imply them. These are the arts which embitter controversy. And it is by means like these, that those conferences of reasonable beings, which ought to put an end to strife, often add to the fierceness of wrath, and help to make enmity perpetual.

*Eliphaz exhorteth Job to repent, with many promises.*

21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.

22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. 27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.

23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. 28 Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.

24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. 29 When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, *There is* lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.

25 Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 30 He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine

26 For then shalt thou have hands.

#### LECTURE 798.

*These promises to the penitent compared with those in the Gospel.*

How like in many points to the very truth of the Gospel, is this latter part of the concluding speech of Eliphaz! "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." Such was the maxim of the patriarchal faith. Now hear it explained by the words of Christ: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17. 3. Again Eliphaz says to Job, "Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth; and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles." Which we may explain by the words of Jeremiah, thus quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. 10. 16, 17. Yes, it is God that puts away iniquity, not man. Or, in other words, it is by the help of God that man must put it away far from his tabernacles. It is by receiving the instruction which God gives, and by leaning on the help which God affords, and by laying up his words in the heart, and by returning with repentance unto the Lord; this is the way of reconciliation unto God, and of deliverance from our sins, from the guilt of them, and from the power of them, as pointed out in Scripture from one end to the other.

Nor is the promise which Eliphaz holds forth to Job, on condition of his true repentance, so altogether unlike the spirit of the Gospel, as we may be apt at first sight to suppose. "Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou

shalt have plenty of silver." And so it is written in the New Testament: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matt. 5. 5. And again, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4. 8. And again, our Lord assures his disciples, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6. 33. And once more, when "Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee," "Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." Mark 10. 28—30. A gracious promise, for the support of those whose feeble faith leaps not beyond time into eternity, nor feels the present, as we surely might do, almost as nothing when compared with the future! A gracious promise, and graciously accompanied by mention of the persecution to be expected, lest this when it come, should damp our faith, or abate the ardour of our love!

Other fruits of our turning unto God, as here set forth by Eliphaz, are to have delight in Him, and instead of shrinking from his presence to lift up our faces towards Him, also to make our prayer unto Him, and be heard; to make vows unto Him, and keep them; to decree or resolutely determine to obey Him, and to be enabled to do as we decree, through the light which He makes to shine upon our ways; and yet more when cast down then to be lifted up, He being ready to save the lowly in heart; and also to be the means of deliverance to others; for thus we may understand the purport of the last verse, according to the marginal translation, "the innocent shall deliver the island." And in like manner we learn in the New Testament to draw nigh to God with the confidence of sons. See Rom. 8. 15. We are assured that the ears of the Lord are open to the prayers of the righteous. See 1 Pet. 3. 12. We are led to think that God's grace will prove sufficient for us, and will enable us to hold to the decree which we have made, that nothing shall separate us from the love of God. See Acts 12. 9; Rom. 8. 39. We are encouraged, however grievously we may have fallen, to hope that God will, upon our true repentance, receive us as a forgiving parent, that goes forth to meet a long lost son. See Luke 15. 22. And to encourage us in trying to help others in the way of everlasting life, we are recommended to exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; see Heb. 3. 13; and we are informed that the earnest prayer of a righteous man availeth much. See James 5. 16.



*Job declareth his confidence in God's favourable decision.*

- 1 'Then Job answered and said, *him* :  
 2 Even to-day *is* my complaint bitter : my stroke is heavier than my groaning.  
 3 Oh that I knew where I might find him ! *that* I might come *even* to his seat !  
 4 I would order *my* cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.  
 5 I would know the words *which* he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.  
 6 Will he plead against me with *his* great power ? No ; but he would put *strength* in me.  
 7 There the righteous might dispute with him ; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.  
 8 Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there* ; and backward, but I cannot perceive him :  
 9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold *him* : he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see
- 10 But he knoweth the way that I take : *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.  
 11 My foot hath held *his* steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.  
 12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips ; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food*.  
 13 But he *is* in one *mind*, and who can turn him ? and *what* his soul desireth, even *that* he doeth.  
 14 For he performeth *the thing* that is appointed for me : and many such *things* are with him.  
 15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence : when I consider, I am afraid of him.  
 16 For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me :  
 17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, *neither* hath he covered the darkness from my face.

## LECTURE 799.

*Of aiming at perfect love and perfect obedience.*

In reply to the heavy charges brought against him, Job here solemnly declares his conviction, that whensoever it should please God to bring him to judgment, he should " come forth as gold." He felt that he had endeavoured to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man. See Acts 24. 16. And it was the consciousness of this that induced him to wish, that he might forthwith be put upon his trial. He longed to know where he might find God, with a view to pleading his cause before Him. He was persuaded, that God would not plead against him with all the might and majesty of divine power, but rather would give him help and strength to abide the trial. And gladly would he have appealed from such decisions as those of his friends, to the upright sentence of the Judge of all the earth. But he knew not where to find God, that he might obtain a

hearing. He was ready to say with those who are mentioned by the prophet Isaiah, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Isai. 45. 15.

In the midst of this perplexity it was Job's comfort to believe, that God saw him, though he could not see God: "he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." A solemn assertion of the truth, made by Job not in vain glory, but in unaffected simplicity of heart, by way of reply to the charges brought against him by his friends, and in explanation of his earnest desire to have his case decided before the Lord. And to this he adds the acknowledgment, that he knew it was of no use for him to wish, in opposition to the mind of God, who would doubtless perform the things He had determined on against him, and who, in the order of his providence, dealt thus with many of his servants. And this, in the weakness of Job's nature, troubled him; for he knew not to what sufferings he might yet be exposed. He needed the exhortation of St. James, "Be patient therefore, brethren." James 5. 7. And he had never heard, as we have, the encouraging assurance of St. Paul, "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4. 17.

But though in some things Job fell short of that which is proposed to every Christian's practice in the Gospel, though he knew not how to find Almighty God, as well as we, who have been plainly told by Christ, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me;" John 14. 6; though in these respects it may be said of Job, as it was said by our Lord of John the Baptist, "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he;" Matt. 11. 11; yet in many points Job has here set before us a pattern, which we, in the full enjoyment of Gospel light, find it hard to imitate. When we hear him describe his feelings, we might almost think that he had learnt from the words of St. John, that "herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." 1 John 4. 17. When he states the manner of his practice, he speaks as if he were acquainted with these words of Christ, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." John 4. 34. How much more then ought we to bear these words in mind, to act up to the standard set before us in the Gospel, to aim in all we do at fulfilling the whole of God's commandments; and in all we feel to approach as near as possible, and daily to study to approach nearer, to that "perfect love which casteth out fear!" 1 John 4. 18.

*Job sheweth how men sin whilst judgment is delayed.*

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| <p>1 Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?</p> <p>2 Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed <i>thereof</i>.</p> <p>3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.</p> <p>4 They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.</p> <p>5 Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness <i>yieldeth</i> food for them and for their children.</p> <p>6 They reap <i>every one</i> his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked.</p> | <p>7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that <i>they have</i> no covering in the cold.</p> <p>8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.</p> <p>9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.</p> <p>10 They cause <i>him</i> to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf <i>from</i> the hungry;</p> <p>11 <i>Which</i> make oil within their walls, and tread <i>their</i> winepresses, and suffer thirst.</p> <p>12 Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 800.

*It is good for us not to know the day of judgment.*

We see here that it is no new thing for men to be very desirous to know the time of the universal judgment. "Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days." God knows the time; why should He not reveal it to his faithful servants? Thus did Job inquire of old. And thus, in after times the disciples asked of our Lord, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" In answer to which questions, our Lord first warns us not to be deceived by false signs, and then tells us, "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Matt. 24. 3, 36. Doubtless, then, it is good for us to be kept in a state of awful uncertainty; never knowing when that day will come, only knowing that it will come soon and suddenly. This is doubtless the best method for the trial of our faith, for the exercise of our patience, diligence, and love.

Job seems to have thought that this uncertainty encouraged men in sinning. For it was probably under this notion, that he recited the various acts of oppression which he had met with or observed, as frequently practised in his age and country. Such were removing landmarks, plundering flocks, and feeding thereof, depriving the widow and the fatherless of their cattle, injuring the needy, and making the poor hide themselves through fear.



Such was the practice of going forth in troops to plunder those who travelled through the wilderness, or to make a prey of the corn and vintage of those who laboured peaceably for their bread. "They reap every one his corn in the field;" each seizes by force on as much as he can carry. And "the wicked" to use the marginal translation, these wicked plunderers "gather the vintage." They used also to strip men of their clothing, leaving them nothing but the bare rock for their shelter. Whilst others, equally unprincipled, but not so openly indulging in robbery and wrong, would seize upon fatherless children as their slaves, under the plea that they were pledged to them for debt. Or, on the like pretext, they would take the poor man's clothing, or carry off the sheaf from the hungry. They would constrain others to labour in making oil for them, or wine, without giving them enough to quench their thirst. And whilst all this wickedness was practised with seeming impunity in the country, it was no less true that "Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them;" that is to say, God does not straightway call them to account for it.

In several of the particulars here mentioned, there appeared to be an allusion to the charges which Eliphaz had brought against Job. See Ch. 22. 6—9. And it is probable that Job meant to imply, that since these things were notoriously practised with impunity for a time, it could not follow from his being heavily afflicted that he must have been guilty of such practices. But the chief consideration pressing on his mind, was the encouragement apparently afforded to such evil deeds, by the uncertainty of the day of retribution. And doubtless this does, in a certain sense, encourage the like oppressive practices still prevalent in the world. "We walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5. 7. And they who walk by sight only are ever apt to ask within themselves, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. 3. 4. And on the presumption that all things will continue as they have done, they encroach on their neighbour's land, they rob their neighbour's flock, they enrich themselves at the expense of the poor, they steal lawlessly, or they wrong under cover of law, and they make both town and country ring with the groans of want and nakedness, of brutish ignorance or slavish toil, whilst they themselves in ease and idleness, in frivolous amusement, or in the vain pursuit of fruitless knowledge, are faring sumptuously every day. Such are the ways of those who walk by sight and not by faith. Such is their abuse of that order of things, which God has in his wisdom thought fit to establish, as the best for our trial and improvement. These very abuses, let us remember, these very abuses of the wicked, as they are surely overruled for God's greater glory, so also if we patiently put up with them, and persevere in loving God, will be made to work together for our good.

*Job concludeth his reply to Eliphaz.*

- 13 They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. the snow waters: *so doth* the grave *those which* have sinned.
- 14 The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. 20 The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.
- 15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth *his* face. 21 He evil entreateth the barren *that* beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.
- 16 In the dark they dig through houses, *which* they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. 22 He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no *man* is sure of life.
- 17 For the morning *is* to them even as the shadow of death: if *one* know *them*, *they are* in the terrors of the shadow of death. 23 *Though* it be given him *to be* in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes *are* upon their ways.
- 18 He *is* swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. 24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all *other*, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.
- 19 Drought and heat consume 25 And if *it be* not *so* now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?

## LECTURE 801.

*The evil of rebelling against the light.*

Here we have other instances of iniquity set forth, such as prevailed in the times of Job, and such as are, alas! not uncommon in our own age and country. And with us, as with them of old, this evil comes of rebelling against the light. "They know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." In the instances of murder, theft, and adultery, there is rebellion against the natural light of day, a preference of the darkness of the night. But this appears to be connected, in the mind of Job, with that loving of spiritual darkness rather than spiritual light, which is the case with all whose deeds are evil. This it is that estranges men from the Gospel. And then the being estranged from the Gospel, the rebelling against the light of Christ, this confirms men in their sins, and ensures their condemnation. And so has our Lord plainly taught us, saying, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." John 3. 19, 20.

What, indeed, but wilful ignorance, and hardened rebellion against the light of truth, can account for such gross violence done to conscience, much more to the revealed will of God, as the acts

of the murderer, the thief, and the adulterer? What can more plainly prove the lost and ruined state of men through the corruption of their nature, than that such acts should have prevailed, so soon as this after the fearful warning of the flood; and also that from that time, to the present, they should have been of frequent occurrence? What can more plainly prove, that they who do them are selfcondemned, than their horror of being brought to light in their misdeeds? What can more painfully illustrate the horrible degree of wickedness to which men had arrived before the preaching of the Gospel, than that acts like these were done in open daylight, and that men were found who not only did the same, but had pleasure in them that did them? See Rom. 1. 32. And what can be a stronger proof of the power of Christ's true religion, than the fact, that where it has been professed, even though not received into the heart, it has repressed the shamelessness of sins like these, and has taught them to creep back into the depths of darkness, if not out of regard to God, at least out of respect to man?

Other enormities are next specified by Job. And he contends that those who practise them "are exalted for a little while," however soon afterwards they may be "gone and brought low." He is equally willing to admit that "they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn." The grave consumes them, as heat and drought consume the waters of melting snow. Their birth is forgotten in their death; and the form which was but now the mother's joy, becomes the food of worms. Thus their wickedness is brought to an end; it is "broken as a tree." But then this is by means of death, which is the lot of all men. And this, therefore, did not justify the ground taken by the friends of Job, namely, that heavy affliction in this life is uniformly the lot of the wicked, and that, if dispensed to the righteous, it could not be reconciled with the attributes of God. Job, for his part, defied his friends to prove that they were right. His consciousness of integrity, and his own experience of affliction, united to convince him that his friends were wrong. He was sure, therefore, that it must be consistent with the perfect truth, goodness, and justice of the Lord, to dispense poverty, sickness, and sorrow to his faithful servants. But how this was consistent he knew not as yet. He had not seen, as we have, how God was pleased to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. See Heb. 2. 10. He had not been made to feel this precious truth, familiar to the mind of the afflicted Christian, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. 12. 6. Let us, who know these things, be always prepared to rejoice in tribulation; and instead of grudging the prosperity of the wicked, let us rather tremble, in the midst of thankfulness, to receive at the hands of God unmingled prosperity for ourselves.



*Bildad urgeth God's greatness and man's sinfulness.*

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| 1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,                                | tified with God? or how can he be clean <i>that is</i> born of a woman?                  |
| 2 Dominion and fear <i>are</i> with him, he maketh peace in his high places. | 5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. |
| 3 Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise? | 6 How much less man, <i>that is</i> a worm? and the son of man, <i>which is</i> a worm?  |
| 4 How then can man be jus-   |  |

## LECTURE 802.

*That we, being justified through Christ, rejoice in hope of glory.*

It is now the turn of Bildad to speak; and we may observe that he does not attempt to gainsay the things stated by Job to be facts. Rather he dwells eloquently on the greatness and the majesty of God; and hence he argues the folly of any man's attempting to be justified with Him. That which he says on this subject is most strictly true, and most profitable for us to bear ever in mind. That which he meant to imply against Job does not follow in the sense in which he meant it. For if no one born of woman be clean with God, this was true not only of Job, but also of those upright men, whom Bildad and his friends supposed to be always blest with prosperity. If, then, they could be justified, so might Job. If they could be rewarded, without being justified, so might Job. In short, Bildad's argument comprehended all men alike; and therefore it did not touch the main point at issue, relating to the difference between one man and another. True though it were that man is but as a worm compared to God, and altogether unclean in his sight, it might still be true, or it might not, that man is never afflicted except for sin, never signally afflicted except for having been a very great and grievous sinner. But though this, the main point in the discussion, is not touched at all by Bildad's argument, there is one point in Job's part of the conference, on which the words of Bildad seem to press with weight, and that is the eagerness which Job expressed to enter upon his trial before God. And probably it was to this that Bildad intended that his words should chiefly be applied. To this consideration let us now apply them, as it concerns ourselves. How is it that in any case we can bear to think of death with composure, when we remember, that as we are when we die so we shall be when we are judged? How can we contemplate with peace of mind, much less with hope and joy, the thought of that day in which God has appointed to judge the world in righteousness? If we have any such hopes, any such rejoicing in hope, have we sufficiently considered who God is, and who we ourselves are? He how great, and we how feeble? He how holy, and we how vile? Have we remembered that,

as Bildad reminds us, "Dominion and fear are with him, he maketh peace in his high places?" How improbable then, that He should admit into the heavens wherein He dwells, beings so full of strife within themselves, and so apt to strive with one another, as men are! "Is there any number of his armies?" He needs not, then, we may be sure, He needs not our services; He can compel us, let us be aware, by legions of angels, if He should so think fit, both to do all his will, and to suffer all his pleasure. "And upon whom doth not his light arise?" He can see all men, yea, and angels also, good spirits and evil, and the thoughts of each. "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" What thoughts or actions can we have, that are fit to be seen by Him, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," and will "not look upon iniquity?" Hab. 1. 13. "Behold, even to the moon, it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight." Bright as these radiant orbs appear to us, and free from all spot as is the lustre with which they adorn the vault of night, yet compared with the glory in which God dwells, the light of the stars must be considered dim, and the moon is as though it shined not at all. "How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" Insignificant we feel ourselves to be; and not only so, but also by reason of our sinfulness vile and hateful in the sight of God. And wonderful it seems, that we should in any case be able to attain to a hopeful looking for of judgment, or to look for it with any thing short of lively fear.

But even Job had attained to this; and that, without presumption, as we suppose, by faith in a Redeemer who was yet to come. We, for our parts, know of his having come, and of his having wrought redemption for us by his death. And, "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5. 1, 2. We have peace at present. We have a joyful hope for the future. The greatness of the God before whom we shall appear does not dismay us. For even He it is who gave his Son to be our Saviour. The consciousness of our having been made vile by sin, neither can this prevent us from rejoicing. Because we know "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1. 15. And we know that if we have repented, and have been converted, our sins will be found to be blotted out, "when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Acts 3. 19. And therefore trusting in his merits, not in our own, and working not in our own strength but his, we find it consistent with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and with a lowly reverence for God's greatness, still to be "always looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2 Pet. 3. 12.

*Job sheweth that he also can set forth the greatness of God.*

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| <p>1 But Job answered and said,<br/>         2 How hast thou helped <i>him that</i><br/> <i>is</i> without power? <i>how</i> savest thou<br/>         the arm <i>that hath</i> no strength?<br/>         3 How hast thou counselled <i>him</i><br/> <i>that hath</i> no wisdom? and <i>how</i><br/>         hast thou plentifully declared<br/>         the thing as it is?<br/>         4 To whom hast thou uttered<br/>         words? and whose spirit came<br/>         from thee?<br/>         5 Dead <i>things</i> are formed from<br/>         under the waters, and the in-<br/>         habitants thereof.<br/>         6 Hell <i>is</i> naked before him, and<br/>         destruction hath no covering.<br/>         7 He stretcheth out the north<br/>         over the empty place, and hang-<br/>         eth the earth upon nothing.<br/>         8 He bindeth up the waters in<br/>         his thick clouds; and the cloud<br/>         is not rent under them.</p> | <p>9 He holdeth back the face of<br/>         his throne, and spreadeth his<br/>         clouds upon it.<br/>         10 He hath compassed the wa-<br/>         ters with bounds, until the day<br/>         and night come to an end.<br/>         11 The pillars of heaven trem-<br/>         ble and are astonished at his<br/>         reproof.<br/>         12 He divideth the sea with<br/>         his power, and by his under-<br/>         standing he smiteth through the<br/>         proud.<br/>         13 By his spirit he hath gar-<br/>         nished the heavens; his hand<br/>         hath formed the crooked ser-<br/>         pent.<br/>         14 Lo, these <i>are</i> parts of his<br/>         ways: but how little a portion is<br/>         heard of him? but the thunder<br/>         of his power who can under-<br/>         stand?</p> |
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#### LECTURE 803.

*That we ought to vie with each other in glorifying God.*

It appears to be Job's intention, in these words, to shew, by way of reply to Bildad, that he needed not his friend to teach him the excellency of the power of God. "How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength?" A great assistance truly to instruct one who knows these things so well as I do, who can tell, quite as well as you can, of the might and majesty of the Lord, as compared with the weakness and vileness of man. Thou hast spoken as if counselling one destitute of all wisdom, and hast merely declared that which is at all hands agreed upon. And this thou hast done to one whose knowledge in these matters is at least equal to thine own; doing it with the air of one animated by a spirit of wisdom which demands my entire deference. After this scornful beginning, Job proceeds to give an instance, that he also can speak with eloquence on the same subject as Bildad; and thus he happily turns from reproving his friend to praising and magnifying God. Would that his friends and he had throughout confined their strife to trying points like this, which could extol most highly the greatness of the Lord! Would that all the bitterness of religious controversy amongst us were turned into a holy emulation, and a vying with each other, as to which of us can most abundantly glorify God, not only with our lips, but also with our lives!

Very edifying is the account of God's creative power, to which



Job proceeds to give utterance. The heavens, the earth, and that which is beneath the earth, are regarded in one comprehensive view, as the workmanship of the almighty Hand. First the wonders of the deep are mentioned, their living inhabitants. And perhaps there is here also an allusion to those former inhabitants of the waters, now nowhere to be met with alive, whose gigantic remains have lately excited so much attention and astonishment amongst us. "Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof." Then we are told, that "hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." The grave, which we close so carefully, is uncovered before God; and the place of departed spirits, if place it can properly be called, invisible and unsearchable as it is to us, is all open in his sight. Next we have a most expressive description of the firmament stretched out over our heads, and of the earth as it hangs on nothing but itself. How lively also and just is the account here given us, of the manner in which water is stored up for us in the clouds, bound as it were in bales, and the fastening not rent, until the rain is needed for our use! And how sublime is the notion of God's own abode, as far as He who is present every where can have any where a dwelling place of his own, how sublime is the notion of that dwelling place, conveyed by the simple statement, that it is withheld from view; we beholding both the clouds and the sky above them, and also the stars that spangle all the firmament, and yet not seeing to the throne of the most High! He it is who "hath compassed the waters with bounds;" having declared by his word, after the flood, that they should never again destroy all flesh; see Gen. 9. 15; having promised, that "while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Gen. 8. 22. "The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof;" they are afraid to disobey his orders, they are terrified by the manifestation of his wrath against sinners, in the flood which He brought upon the world of the ungodly. "He divideth the sea with his power; and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud." He can master with equal ease the most mighty elements, and the most haughty spirits; He can say, either to the raging ocean, or to rebel man, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Ch. 38. 11. For it was by his Spirit that the heavens were made and furnished with worlds, and also that the inhabitants thereof were formed, yea, even those which oppose themselves unto Him, yea, even "that old serpent, called the devil." Rev. 12. 9. And all these things now recited are only "parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him?" How little has been told in saying all these things! Who then can comprehend the greatness of his majesty? "The thunder of his power who can understand?"

*Job declareth his abhorrence of wickedness.*

- 1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said,  
 2 *As* God liveth, *who* hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, *who* hath vexed my soul;  
 3 All the while my breath *is* in me, and the spirit of God *is* in my nostrils;  
 4 My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.  
 5 God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.  
 6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live.  
 7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.  
 8 For what *is* the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?  
 9 Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?  
 10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?  
 11 I will teach you by the hand of God: *that* which *is* with the Almighty will I not conceal.  
 12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen *it*; why then are ye thus altogether vain?
- 13 This *is* the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, *which* they shall receive of the Almighty.  
 14 If his children be multiplied, *it is* for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.  
 15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep.  
 16 Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay;  
 17 He may prepare *it*, but the just shall put *it* on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.  
 18 He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth *that* the keeper maketh.  
 19 The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he *is* not.  
 20 Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.  
 21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place.  
 22 For *God* shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand.  
 23 *Men* shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

## LECTURE 804.

*The way of wickedness is a way of wretchedness.*

Job, finding that Zophar, whose turn it was to speak, said nothing, "continued his parable," went on with his discourse; first protesting his sincerity and integrity, and then describing the case of the wicked, and the misery awaiting them at their end. This perhaps he did partly with a view to shew his friends that he could set forth these matters as well as they. And partly,

he designed to strengthen that which he had said before on the same subject, by pointing out the dissatisfaction which attends on wickedness even in the time of its prosperity. And in so doing, he prepares the way for the important subject of the next chapter, the worthlessness of worldly goods, and worldly skill, and worldly glory, as compared with the preciousness of heavenly wisdom.

Because Job maintained that good men sometimes were afflicted, and that wicked men sometimes prospered, his friends had tried to fasten on him the conclusion, that it was as well to be wicked as to be good. Here therefore he protests most earnestly, that this is far from his meaning. He declares his full purpose of heart to cleave to God, and to the fulfilment of his will, as long as his life should last. And further to prove his horror of the notion ascribed to him, he adds, "Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous." They may indeed gain much he argues. But then what is their state of mind all the while? What is their amount of hope in God's help? Will they delight themselves in the Almighty? Will they be able to make known to Him their requests in prayer? These things are the chief joy of the righteous in prosperity; these are their great comfort in adversity. But in these joys the wicked have no share. And this, Job tells his friends, they must have observed and known, as well as he; so that they need not have persisted in attaching so much weight to the circumstance of outward prosperity.

But further, besides their present disadvantages, which mar all their joy in the possession of their gains, they are speedily overtaken by the displeasure of the Lord, which visits them in their children, in their substance, and in their character. Their widows weep not at their death. And instead of friends to make lamentation, men clap their hands at them, and hiss them out of their places. They die without hope. They are buried without honour. And if they would fain flee out of God's hand when they have to die, how much more when they are summoned by the last trump to stand before their Judge! Such were the fruits of wickedness in the times of Job. Such have they been from that time to the present. If then we would have a happy life, a peaceful death, a glorious resurrection, let us, with Job of old, resolve, and by God's grace let us keep our resolution, that we will neither speak nor practise wickedness all the while our breath is in us.

O Thou, without whose grace we can neither purpose nor perform any thing that is good, help us to make holy resolutions, and yet more, help us to keep them; and give us at the present peace in serving Thee, and hereafter everlasting joy, through Christ our Lord!



*Job compareth human skill with heavenly wisdom.*

- 1 Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it.
- 2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.
- 3 He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.
- 4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men.
- 5 As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire.
- 6 The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold.
- 6 There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen:
- 7 The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.
- 9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots.
- 10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.
- 11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.
- 12 But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?
- 13 Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.
- 14 The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.
- 15 It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.
- 16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.
- 17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.
- 18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.
- 19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

## LECTURE 805.

*The immeasurable value of saving knowledge.*

The two great elements of worldly glory are worldly riches, and worldly wisdom. Job here testifies to the eminence which mankind may attain to in these respects, whilst yet they may be destitute of that wisdom which is unto salvation, and of those riches which endure unto everlasting life. And very interesting is the account here given of the discoveries thus early made by man, in the knowledge of things profitable for this present life. Veins of silver they had found out, and places fit for fining gold. They had also taken iron out of the earth, and brass, or, perhaps rather, copper. They had devised means of enjoying light during the night season, probably by means of mineral substances, here called "stones of darkness." They had made a passage of the trackless waters, which were thus as it were dried up to form a highway. By tillage of the ground they had supplied themselves with bread; and by digging deeper they had obtained fuel for

the preparation of their food. Nay, they had ventured far into the bowels of the earth in search of the precious metals and precious stones, for the ornament and luxury of life. Thus they had contrived a path, where neither bird nor beast had ever traversed; far and wide as these creatures are apt to roam about in every direction. In the working of their mines, ever amongst the most bold and skilful of human undertakings, they had learnt how to cut channels for the water springs, or to dam them up so as not to overflow; and as their eyes had searched out every precious thing, so their hands had brought these treasures forth to light.

Here we have indeed a lively picture of the exercise of skill, and of the ardour of pursuit, with which mankind, in those early ages of the world, sought after and seized upon the yet unrifled treasures, that lay beneath the surface of the earth. But where, as Job proceeds to ask, where could wisdom be found? in what soil or mine is the place of understanding? The wisdom which he speaks of, as we learn soon afterwards, is the fear of the Lord, and to depart from evil is the understanding. See ver. 28. This he says was not to be discovered by worldly wisdom, nor to be purchased by worldly wealth. No arts of mining, no enterprise of commerce, could procure it; "the depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not in me." It could not be gotten for gold neither for silver. Its value could not be expressed by the gold of Ophir, nor by any of the various precious stones that were to be met with in all the known regions of the earth. It could not at that time; neither can it now, when every quarter of the globe is known, and every corner of it diligently ransacked, in search of what is rare, beautiful, and precious; still can none of the world's treasures, no, nor all of them put together, be set against the value of divine wisdom, nor avail to purchase spiritual understanding.

How bountiful then is God, from whom alone this gift can proceed, that He offers it to every one who earnestly desires it; yea, offers to bestow it "without money and without price!" Is. 55. 1. How merciful is this provision for the necessities of our souls, that according to his gracious will the Gospel is preached to the poor! See Matt. 11. 5. Oh how largely has the great Giver of all good things condescended to our wants! Oh how fearfully wicked is our foolishness, if we refuse his most inestimable gift! Nor is it enough that we accept it; we must accept it thankfully, we must prize it highly, we must rejoice in possessing it. We must feel that in knowing God, as revealed in the Gospel, by Jesus Christ, we have a treasure which we would not part with for all the wealth in all the world. And we must prove that we feel thus, by the zeal with which we seek the increase of this heavenly wisdom, and by the anxiety which we manifest to impart it unto others for their everlasting good.

*Job declareth the source of divine wisdom.*

- 20 Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?  
 21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.  
 22 Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.  
 23 God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.  
 24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven;  
 25 To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure.  
 26 When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder:  
 27 Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out.  
 28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

## LECTURE 806.

*That God is the great Teacher in things heavenly.*

In the former part of this chapter Job enumerates the three great sources of wealth in the patriarchal times, namely, agriculture, mining, and the interchange of commerce. These were also the subjects on which mankind had exercised the utmost of worldly wisdom. If we add to these the triumphs of science, art, and manufacture, we shall have completed the chief objects of modern pursuit, the chief means of riches, and subjects of ingenious research, which now engross the attention of the world. But when we have summed up all, we may still repeat the question of the patriarch, "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" Though a man were to possess of every thing that the earth brings forth, and of all the treasures which men find within it; though he had at his command every comfort and luxury which commerce can procure from all quarters of the world; though he understood every science, and were master of every art, to turn every thing that nature can supply to all the useful and ornamental purposes which man has invented and completed; still he would be no nearer to the great ends of life, the saving of the soul, the securing an interest in life eternal, and glorifying the God that made him, by believing and living according to his will.

How then may we attain to this divine wisdom, and in what does it consist, and in what quarter must we apply for information and assistance, if we would not, after all our glory here, end in perishing shamefully for ever? It is not of men that we must inquire; "seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air." Not though besides all our present enterprises of skill and courage, we could mount on



eagles' wings, and fly aloft far and wide in search of it; not even so should we be the nearer to that heavenly understanding, without which all other skill is vain. Rather we might do well to ask the silent grave, to draw nigh unto the house appointed for all living, to meditate on the weakness, dishonour, and corruption which the rich and the learned there share alike with the ignorant and the poor. This would give us some glimpse of the wisdom we are in search of; this at least would be apt to put us in the way of learning in the proper quarter. For nothing is more likely to make us turn to God, and lean upon his help, than that deep conviction of our own helplessness, which is forced on us by the thought of our mortality. "Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears."

But no reflection of our own, no mere communing with ourselves on the transitory nature of this present life, will suffice to make us wise unto salvation. "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." It is He that must impart to us this wisdom. And why? because He it is who created us. His hand made all these things, which we deem it so great a matter to find out, to understand, or to possess. He called them into being. He made them out of nothing. He created both them and us. The skill we exercise in regard to them, this also is his handiwork. And when He made all things, and gave to each of his works its own law which should not be broken; when He balanced the waters and the winds; "when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder;" then did He, in the plenitude of his power, lay down and declare this as the law of our well being: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Now, therefore, we know both what it is we are in search of, and of whom it is to be obtained. Now has Job abundantly declared that whatever prosperity the wicked may enjoy, no man can be happy who is not also holy. Now are we plainly instructed, that to live in the fear of God, departing constantly further and further off from evil, this is the only wisdom worthy of the name, and this no one can teach us except God. To Him then let us apply with faith in prayer. To his word let us resort, and to the teaching of his ministers, and above all to the teaching of his Spirit. If we have hitherto thought to get this understanding as we would get worldly wisdom, merely by reading and reflecting, depending simply on our own unassisted faculties, no wonder that however well we may comprehend its meaning, we are unable to receive it in our hearts. Let us apply to God, and trust in his assistance, using diligently all the means and abilities He has given us, and then we shall learn effectually, and know practically, both to fear God, and to depart from evil.

*Job maketh a statement of his conduct in prosperity.*

- 1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said,  
 2 Oh that I were as *in* months past, as *in* the days *when* God preserved me;  
 3 When his candle shined upon my head, *and when* by his light I walked *through* darkness;  
 4 As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God *was* upon my tabernacle;  
 5 When the Almighty *was* yet with me, *when* my children *were* about me;  
 6 When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil;  
 7 When I went out to the gate through the city, *when* I prepared my seat in the street!  
 8 The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up.  
 9 The princes refrained talking, and laid *their* hand on their mouth.  
 10 The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.  
 11 When the ear heard *me*, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw *me*, it gave witness to me:  
 12 Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and *him that had* none to help him.  
 13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.  
 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment *was* as a robe and a diadem.  
 15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet *was* I to the lame.  
 16 I *was* a father to the poor: and the cause *which* I knew not I searched out.  
 17 And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.  
 18 Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply *my* days as the sand.  
 19 My root *was* spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.  
 20 My glory *was* fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.  
 21 Unto me *men* gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel.  
 22 After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them.  
 23 And they waited for me *as* for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.  
 24 *If* I laughed on them, they believed *it* not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down.  
 25 I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one *that* comforteth the mourners.

## LECTURE 807.

*Of learning by the pattern of a good example.*

Boasting and vain glory can never be allowable. But it may sometimes be a man's duty to state the truth of his own upright conduct; in order that, according to St. Paul's advice, he may

not let his good be evil spoken of. See Rom. 14. 16. Job had been charged with conduct the very contrary to that which he knew that he had pursued in the times of his prosperity. This obliged him to testify to the truth of the case. And further, in confirmation of the argument he had been urging, he wished to shew his friends that he had not merely been outwardly prosperous, but had also been made partaker of that heavenly wisdom, which no wealth could purchase, no prosperity secure. His statement is most valuable to us, as shewing us both what excellence we ought to aim at, and what has been actually attained to. It is also highly interesting as a proof, that whatever sins of the tongue Job might be tempted to commit in the agony of his affliction, he had, in nearly every instance, been able to avoid those offences, both in word and deed, which commonly beset such as are in great prosperity.

And surely most inviting as a pattern, more especially to the great and wealthy, is the picture here drawn of one, who had all that this world most esteems, and who used it all to the good of his fellowcreatures, and to the glory of the gracious Giver. No wonder that Job earnestly wished himself replaced in a condition so happy and so honourable. Blest he was in his family, and blest in his substance. Blest he was in the good esteem of young and old, of rich and poor. Blest he was in possessing ample means of doing good, and in the disposition to use them bountifully, and in the kind acceptance which he met with, on the part of all whom he was enabled to assist. But there is no need to dwell upon the particulars of a passage so clear as to require little exposition, so striking as to command universal admiration. Rather let us say here unto ourselves, and to each other, according to our means and opportunities, "Go, and do thou likewise." Luke 10. 37. Go, and speak wisely, and act charitably. Go, and follow the example of Job in his prosperity; and beware of the faults he committed in adversity. Go, and imitate a pattern better than that which Job, or any other human being can supply, the faultless example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Him we may see benevolence and beneficence, manifested not only when men received Him gladly, but also when they persecuted Him cruelly. He went about at once doing good, and bearing evil; making the widow's heart to sing for joy, whilst Himself a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Eyes He was to the blind, and feet to the lame. He came to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to comfort them that mourned. But when He came unto his own, instead of giving ear to Him, his own received Him not. Instead of honouring Him, they set Him at nought. Instead of taking Him gladly for their King, they crucified Him. Yet even when on the cross He prayed for his enemies. And if He greatly helped many whilst He lived, much more by his death did He redeem all.



*Job lamenteth the contempt heaped upon him.*

- 1 But now *they that are younger* than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.
- 2 Yea, whereto *might* the strength of their hands *profit* me, in whom old age was perished?
- 3 For want and famine *they were* solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste.
- 4 Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots *for* their meat.
- 5 They were driven forth from among *men*, (they cried after them as *after* a thief;)
- 6 To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks.
- 7 Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together.
- 8 *They were* children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth.
- 9 And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword.
- 10 They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face.
- 11 Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me.
- 12 Upon *my* right *hand* rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction.
- 13 They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper.
- 14 They came *upon me* as a wide breaking in of *waters*: in the desolation they rolled themselves *upon me*.

#### LECTURE 803.

*How meekly we ought to put up with insult.*

See here the inconsistency of worldly greatness! See the melancholy change from honour to dishonour, from universal esteem to the most abject scorn, befalling one who had so lately said within himself, "I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand!" Ch. 29. 18. This perhaps was the very thing which made Job's reverses needful for his good. This presumption in the continuance of prosperity rendered it desirable that he should fall into adversity. Else he might have been tempted so to presume on his riches and honours, as to indulge in some wilful offence; whereby he would have fallen a much worse fall than this from greatness to obscurity and scorn, a falling into the guilt of sin, a falling under the displeasure of the Lord. How good was it then in God to cast him down from the eminence of wealth and of nobility, into the depths of want, sickness, vexation, and disgrace! How thankful may we be, when it shall seem fit to Him to visit us by any manner of adversity; well assured as we are, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth!" Heb. 12. 6.

But how marvellous that God should make use of wicked men

for the affliction and correction of the righteous ! How wisely is their wickedness overruled for good ! How skilfully is the vile dross of their evil tempers made the means of refining the faith and patience of those, whose blood is most precious in the sight of God ! They who appeared to Job so worthless, the very outcasts of society, were turned herein to a good account, by the providence of God ; and were made to do that service to the patriarch, which none of those who had so greatly loved and honoured him were able to perform. By scoffing and scorning, by their offensive language, and by their rude violence, they helped to humble his soul unto the dust ; and they prepared him for learning the important lesson, seldom learnt but in the school of affliction, that “before honour is humility.” Prov. 15. 33. Surely this thought might help us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to do good to them that evil entreat and persecute us, see Matt. 5. 44 ; the thought that their enmity, and ill words, and evil treatment, may become the means, if we do but receive them as we ought, of our growing in the graces of the Gospel, and increasing in meetness for partaking of eternal joy.

But behold we have a more constraining motive than the thought of our own gain, to induce us to comply with this commandment of our Lord. We have the force of our Lord's own example, under circumstances, which the words of Job before us are well fitted to bring to our remembrance. On Him was poured out the like excess of indignity ; on Him were inflicted further the chains of captivity, and the agonies of a cruel death ; on Him, who, whilst He was alive and at liberty, “went about doing good.” Acts 10. 38. In Him, and in his sufferings, were fulfilled both this type, if it be a type, of Job's calamity, and also these corresponding expressions of the Psalmist, which we know to be in part prophetic of Christ : “But as for me, I am a worm, and no man : a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn : they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that he would deliver him : let him deliver him, if he will have him.” Ps. 22. 6—8. And did He, who was no less than God's own Son, endure such scorn as this for us ? What then ought not we to bear with patience ? What wrong, what insult, mockery, or cruelty, that the very best of us can suffer from the very worst, ought to move in us any passion, except sorrow for their wickedness, any words except prayer for their forgiveness ?

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Luke 23. 34. Thus let us pray, in the words of Christ upon the cross. Or if we think it too far above us to come up to Christ's example, let us be led forwards thereunto by one of our own frail fellowcreatures, thus praying for them that stoned him to death : “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Acts 7. 60.

*Job describeth his sufferings of mind and body.*

- 15 Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud.
- 16 And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.
- 17 My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest.
- 18 By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.
- 19 He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.
- 20 I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me *not*.
- 21 Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.
- 22 Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance.
- 23 For I know *that* thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.
- 24 Howbeit he will not stretch out *his* hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction.
- 25 Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? *was not* my soul grieved for the poor?
- 26 When I looked for good, then evil came *unto me*: and when I waited for light, there came darkness.
- 27 My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me.
- 28 I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, *and* I cried in the congregation.
- 29 I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.
- 30 My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.
- 31 My harp also is *turned to* mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

## LECTURE 809.

*The happiness of resignation to the will of God.*

St. Paul, referring to the extraordinary privations and sufferings of himself and his fellow labourers, writes thus: "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Cor. 4. 9. If the apostles were the last, at least of those recorded in Scripture, as instances of extreme suffering, we may regard Job as one of the first or earliest. And when we read his own account of what he had to undergo, we shall be inclined to look upon him with the deepest interest, and to think it not improbable, that angels as well as men must have felt concerned in his afflictions. For surely that which an evil spirit is permitted to inflict, for the trial of man's faith and patience, good angels are allowed to feel for and compassionate, and in God's due time are commissioned to relieve. And it may help us, in bearing patiently and cheerfully whatsoever it shall please God to lay upon us, if we reflect, that they in heaven who have joy in our repentance, probably also have pity for our sorrows.



But the sufferings of those who suffer patiently, are a spectacle to angels, not only as moving them to heavenly compassion, but also as giving them fresh reason to adore the wisdom and the goodness of Almighty God. They doubtless see further than we can do into the marvellous dispensations of his providence. They doubtless understand, more clearly than we are able, how all things, even the most painful agonies of body and of mind, are made to work together for good to them that love God. See Rom. 8. 28. Let us try to believe entirely that so it is, though we are unable to comprehend how it can be. Let us contemplate these dreadful sufferings of Job, with an unhesitating conviction, that God did not willingly inflict one of them, and that He would not have inflicted any of them, but for good reasons well known to Him, all issuing from that one all sufficient source of all God's dealings, namely, his universal love.

To this point then let us prepare our minds beforehand, that if we should be visited with any of these sad afflictions enumerated by Job, we might stedfastly maintain the conviction, that He who rules in heaven and in earth, would not permit them but for good. On the head of this his faithful servant He let Satan heap at once reverse of circumstances, disease of body, and terrors of mind; days of affliction, and sleepless nights; loathsome sores, and the painful apprehension that God had become averse to hear his prayers. In this complicated agony Job saw no prospect of relief except in death, no comfort but in the thought that God would not stretch out his hand to afflict in the grave. The remembrance of his own compassionate conduct, in times past, embittered the cruel usage which he now met with from those, at whose hands he looked for good. And whether he thought of the unkindness of his friends, or of his own disfigured countenance, and unseemly cries, he felt himself fit company for the monsters of the desert, rather than for his fellow creature man. Most pitiable case! Most awful spectacle! Yet most consolatory the thought, that all this was not the punishment that flows from wrath, but the chastisement that proceeds from love. And Job lived to know that thus it was. And Job's transitory sufferings, and his happy end, are written in the Scriptures, in order that we might know this also. Happy they, who learn so devoutly the lessons of God's word, as not to need the correction of his rod! Happy all, who, whether learning from the instances of others, or made a spectacle of suffering themselves, attain to the grace of thoroughly resigning themselves, their souls and bodies, to the good pleasure of Almighty God!

*Job setteth forth his behaviour in private life.*

- 1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?
- 2 For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?
- 3 Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?
- 4 Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?
- 5 If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit;
- 6 Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.
- 7 If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands;
- 8 Then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out.
- 9 If mine heart have been deceived by a woman; or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door;
- 10 Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her.
- 11 For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.
- 12 For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.
- 13 If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me;
- 14 What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?
- 15 Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?
- 16 If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;
- 17 Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;
- 18 (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;)
- 19 If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;
- 20 If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
- 21 If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate:
- 22 Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.
- 23 For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

## LECTURE 810.

*Of being restrained from sin by a sense of God's majesty.*

After describing his upright character in public life, and the respect in which he had been held, Job broke off his discourse, to bemoan the melancholy change in his condition, from the highest honour to the most abject scorn. See ch. 29. 30. He now returns to the account of his own conduct; and in order to complete his

answer to the argument of his friends, and to shew that he had been pious as well as prosperous, he sets forth the morality of his private life. It is remarkable that in Job's view of moral character, we find him approaching at the outset very near to the religion of the heart, set before us as all important in the New Testament. When he would refrain from the act of sin, he felt that he ought not to allow himself to think of it. And to prevent his thoughts from taking an evil course, he knew that he must make a covenant with his eyes. Even as our Lord has fully explained to us, that to look and lust is to commit adultery in the heart. See Matt. 5. 28. He was well aware how apt the heart is to walk, as he expresses it, after the eyes. And by way of checking the lust of the eye, he called to mind how surely God saw all his steps, and what a destruction is most certainly prepared for the wicked. He knew too how closely one sin is connected with another; and how easily he whose heart is deceived by a woman is led to acts of the most mean deceit as well as of the most cruel injustice. He considered himself bound to treat his servants, and even his slaves, with equity; as knowing that he also had a Master in heaven. One who made both them and him. He would have thought himself to blame if not bountiful to the widow and the orphan, and willing to share his abundance with all who were in want. And to have taken advantage of his rank and station, to oppress the poor and helpless, he was aware that this would have made each act of oppression the greater sin. Of acts like these, he here protests that he was guiltless. And he speaks of having been restrained from these abominable sins, not only by his dread of the terrors of the Lord, but also by his sense of the divine majesty. "For destruction from God was a terror unto me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure."

Let these be the thoughts, and not the fear of man, nor simply the fear of punishment, that restrain us from the sins here spoken of. Let it be the thought of God's greatness, yea, and also of his goodness, the thought of his always seeing us, yea, and of his always loving us, let these be the thoughts we call in to our aid, when tempted to acts, words, or thoughts, of impurity or deceit, of unkindness or oppression. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. 39. 9. This was the reflexion of Joseph, when tempted to commit adultery. After thousands of years, man remains liable to the like temptations, and will find it his wisdom to resist Satan by means of the like reflexion: How dare I do that which has been forbidden by One so great and good as God? How dare I transgress his will, ever present as He is to witness what I do, all just as He has declared that He is to punish sin; and all merciful as He has proved Himself to pardon repentant sinners?



*Job concludeth his account of his manner of life.*

- 24 If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, *Thou art my confidence*;  
 25 If I rejoiced because my wealth *was* great, and because mine hand had gotten much;  
 26 If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness;  
 27 And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand:  
 28 This also *were* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judge: for I should have denied the God *that is* above.  
 29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him:  
 30 Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.  
 31 If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied.  
 32 The stranger did not lodge in the street: *but* I opened my doors to the traveller.
- 33 If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom:  
 34 Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, *and* went not out of the door?  
 35 Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire *is*, *that* the Almighty would answer me, and *that* mine adversary had written a book.  
 36 Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, *and* bind it *as* a crown to me.  
 37 I would declare unto him the number of my steps; *as* a prince would I go near unto him.  
 38 If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain;  
 39 If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life:  
 40 Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

#### LECTURE 811.

*Of being willing to abide death and judgment.*

Here we find other fundamental points of morality, set forth by Job on principles very nearly approaching those which we meet with in the Gospel. How closely for instance does he connect covetousness with idolatry, the saying to gold, "Thou art my confidence," with the saying to the sun or to the moon, Thou art my god! How deeply does he search into the spirit of revenge; and how thoroughly does he renounce it in all its forms, and under the most enticing circumstances! How well was he aware of the danger of trying to hide our sinfulness from God! How lightly did he account of the displeasure of the multitude, never refraining from good words or from good actions, with a view to the approbation of the world! Well would it be if all they who are instructed in the Gospel, could protest, with as clear a conscience as the patriarch of old, against the sins of covetousness, idolatry, revenge, inhospitality to the poor, attempting to deceive the all seeing God, standing in awe of the evil world,

and enjoying the good things of the earth, without caring to provide adequately for the wants of those by whose labour their comforts are supplied. To obtain all he could for himself from his land, without shewing mercy to those who held it or wrought it under him, this appears to be the sin which Job mentions and disclaims at the end of his discourse. And when we consider that it would imply selfishness and covetousness, and remember that the love of money is the root of all evil, 1 Tim. 6. 10, we shall not think it strange, that Job, after winding up his statement, and declaring how gladly he would be put upon his trial, should conclude with protesting his innocency in respect of this particular transgression.

And what shall we say of his expressing so earnest a desire to be put upon his trial? How shall we explain his challenge to his adversary, to write his accusation in a book, which he declared that he would gladly take up on his shoulder, and bind it on him as a crown, and would fearlessly answer before God as to the whole course of his life, and that as a prince he would draw nigh to God for judgment? We may suppose, that in part he meant to apply these words to the false charges brought against him by his friends. But we must fear, that as far as concerned God, he spake unadvisedly with his lips; not sufficiently considering, how different a thing it was to answer the accusations of man, and to stand clear in the presence of his Maker. Though in many important points he knew how he ought to walk and to please God, he had not yet beheld that revelation of the power, and wisdom, and glory of the Lord, which soon afterwards constrained him to say, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Ch. 42. 6.

And yet knowing these things so much better as we do, and fully informed as we have been, both as to our own extreme sinfulness, and as to God's perfect holiness, there is a sense in which we may notwithstanding take into our mouths words not unlike to these of Job; and may defy our adversary the devil to meet us, with his accusation written, before the judgment seat of Christ. It is when we are conscious, that instead of trying to hide our transgressions from God, we have confessed them, and repented of them all, with full purpose of amendment. It is when we are persuaded that God has for Christ's sake forgiven us, and that we have been justified through faith. It is when we find that we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God. Then it is that we may venture to say with St. Paul, "To me to die is gain," and therefore we may add, I have "a desire to depart and to be with Christ." Phil. 1. 23. And though after death there must be judgment, and Satan be ready to accuse us before God night and day, yet can we lie down to die in peace, and hope, and joy; and can say with our expiring lips, at once humbly, and triumphantly, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15. 57.

*Elihu expresseth his great anxiety to speak.*

1 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he *was* righteous in his own eyes.

2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram : against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.

3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and *yet* had condemned Job.

4 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they *were* elder than he.

5 When Elihu saw that *there was* no answer in the mouth of *these* three men, then his wrath was kindled.

6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I *am* young, and ye *are* very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.

7 I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.

8 But *there is* a spirit in man : and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

9 Great men are not *always* wise : neither do the aged understand judgment.

10 Therefore I said, Hearken to me ; I also will shew mine opinion.

11 Behold, I waited for your

words ; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.

12 Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, *there was* none of you that convinced Job, *or* that answered his words :

13 Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom : God thrusteth him down, not man.

14 Now he hath not directed *his* words against me : neither will I answer him with your speeches.

15 They were amazed, they answered no more : they left off speaking.

16 When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more ;)

17 I *said*, I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion.

18 For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me.

19 Behold, my belly *is* as wine *which* hath no vent ; it is ready to burst like new bottles.

20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed : I will open my lips and answer.

21 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man.

22 For I know not to give flattering titles ; *in so doing* my maker would soon take me away.

## LECTURE 812.

*The right end and object of conversation.*

When Job's three friends had failed to convince him, and had *greatly* erred in the tenour of their argument, Elihu, who



it seems had been present all the time, declared himself most anxious to express his opinion. His wrath was kindled, or as the expression may rather mean, he felt vexed and impatient, both with Job, for justifying himself, rather than owning that God's dealings must at all events be just, whether man can understand them or not; and also with Job's three friends, for persisting in condemning Job, though unable to give him any satisfactory answer. They, in their anxiety for victory in the argument, imputed to Job things of which he knew that he was guiltless, things which they maintained he must have done wickedly in time past. Elihu brought home to him the charge of that which he had done wrong in the present controversy. He declared that his own zeal within him was like fermenting wine that wanted vent; not as if he had taken offence at any of Job's words, for they were not directed, as he remarks, against him. Neither was he inclined to take the side of either party, as accepting any man's person, or as giving flattering titles unto any one. It was for the truth's sake that he felt so deeply, and longed so ardently to speak; it was for the truth's sake, and for the sake of God and of his glory, not out of personal offence, nor out of personal favour towards any man. And notwithstanding the strong desire prompting him to interpose, he had waited patiently until those who were older than himself had spoken first, and had declined to speak further.

Let the young learn hence to restrain their eagerness, and to pay all due respect unto the aged. Let those who think, however justly, that they can say much to the purpose, refrain their lips, and keep silence, till it is properly their turn to take part in conversation. Let those who argue, watch against the temptation to argue for victory rather than for truth. And let those who possess an understanding which enables them to become the instructors of others, take care that, with Elihu, they ascribe their powers to the spirit given them by Almighty God. This is our best safeguard against conceit and vain glory, to bear in mind that we have nothing which we have not received from One infinitely great, wise, and good. And this will largely help us in choosing aright both when to speak and when to keep silence, namely, this rule, to set before ourselves, for our end in speaking, not the display of our own knowledge or ability, but the advancement of truth, the doing good to each other, and the glorifying Almighty God.

*Elihu reproveth Job for murmuring against God.*

- 1 Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, make thee afraid, neither shall hear my speeches, and hearken my hand be heavy upon thee. to all my words.
- 2 Behold, now I have opened 8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard my mouth, my tongue hath the voice of *thy* words, *saying*, spoken in my mouth.
- 3 My words *shall be of* the up- 9 I am clean without transgression, I *am* innocent; neither rightness of my heart: and my *is there* iniquity in me. lipsshall utter knowledge clearly.
- 4 The spirit of God hath made 10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for me, and the breath of the Al- his enemy,
- mighty hath given me life.
- 5 If thou canst answer me, set 11 He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths.
- thy words* in order before me, 12 Behold, *in* this thou art not stand up.
- 6 Behold, I *am* according to 13 Why dost thou strive against thy wish in God's stead: I also him? for he giveth not account am formed out of the clay.
- 7 Behold, my terror shall not of any of his matters.

## LECTURE 813.

*God being almighty is not accountable to man.*

Elihu labours to conciliate the favourable attention of Job, as knowing that in order to convince the mind, it is a great thing to soothe the affections of the heart. He had already declared, that he was not about to speak as one against whom Job's words had been directed, or as one who meant to adopt the line of argument taken by Job's friends. See ch. 32. 14. Here he protests, that his words shall be spoken in the sincerity of his heart, and according to the genuine judgment of his mind. And as Job had pleaded with God not to let his fear terrify him, as if he felt unequal to meet so awful a Being face to face; see ch. 9. 34; Elihu here states, that he, for his part, though offering to answer Job as God's messenger, or in God's place, was yet no more than a mere man like Job himself, made of the same dust of the earth, by the same Almighty Spirit: "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay." And thus may every minister plead for hearing, with those to whom he is sent by God, saying in the words of the apostle Paul, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels;" 2 Cor. 4. 7; and applying these words thus, We are men of the same nature as yourselves, we have a fellow feeling for all the infirmities of which it is our desire that you should be healed by the grace of God; we come not to triumph over you, we speak not to find fault with you by way of clearing ourselves, but as messengers from God, as ambassadors from Christ, aiming at your good, and at his glory. Such is the spirit in which ministers of the Gospel ought to address themselves to the people committed to their charge. And such

is the honour which the people ought to pay unto God's ministers, to receive them as commissioned to address them in his stead.

Elihu seems to have spoken to Job not only with the authority of a minister, but also with that of a prophet of the Lord. And it is remarkable that Job did not attempt to answer him, nor to gainsay that which he asserted. This looks as if he felt and acknowledged the truth of the doctrines which Elihu laid down, and also the justice of their application to his own case. And it proves great discernment on Elihu's part, unless rather we ought to call it heavenly guidance, that in dealing plainly with Job, and in telling him faithfully of his fault, he made no reference to the reports which others raised against him, but only to the words which he had heard with his own ears from Job's own lips. These words he referred to without exaggerating them. He stated their purport fairly; and he faithfully told Job, that he had been guilty in his hearing of murmuring against God, and of expressing himself too confidently, as if he supposed himself altogether without sin in God's sight. Whether Job really meant to say thus much, or merely to deny the charges falsely brought against him by his friends, his words certainly amount to that which Elihu here states to be their purport. And he certainly therefore needed the correction of a faithful friend or minister, to point out his error, and to lead him to repent of it. Happy they who have the benefit of good counsel on the part of those, who are to them in God's stead, though formed out of the clay like themselves! Happy they who have the grace to receive the just reproof of God's ministers attentively and thankfully, and who, even if in part it be founded on mistake, receive it thankfully as far as it applies, and endeavour to improve thereby!

The answer which Elihu purposes to give to Job, as sufficient to solve all his doubt and perplexity, is simply this, "God is greater than man." Omnipotence; this makes all complaint on our part foolishness. Omnipotence; this makes all attempt to strive against God little short of madness. Omnipotence; this renders it altogether out of the question that God should give account to man, much less be called to account by man, for anything that He thinks fit to do. He that can do everything He pleases, must not for one moment be supposed to be capable of doing anything wrong; must not be spoken of or spoken to, as if it were conceivable that He could have any object but that which is most excellent, in all the dispensations of his providence. "God is greater than man," infinitely greater, and also infinitely more wise than the wisest of men, infinitely more good than the best. Let this thought still our murmurs when they are likely to arise, either at what God lays on us to suffer, or at what He requires us to believe and do, either at pain of body, perplexity of mind, or anguish of heart, this thought which Elihu has so significantly expressed, "God is greater than man."



*Elihu accounteth for the affliction laid on Job.*

- 14 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.
- 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;
- 16 Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,
- 17 That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.
- 18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.
- 19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain:
- 20 So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.
- 21 His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out.
- 22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.
- 23 If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:
- 24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.
- 25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth:
- 26 He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness.
- 27 He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not;
- 28 He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.
- 29 Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man,
- 30 To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.
- 31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak.
- 32 If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.
- 33 If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

## LECTURE 814.

*The use of affliction in bringing us to Christ.*

Elihu had very plainly protested against the monstrous notion, that God could be held accountable to man for any of his dispensations. See ver. 13. But for all this, God has been pleased to explain to us very graciously as much of his ways and dealings, as we are capable of understanding with profit to ourselves. And in the passage before us, He has vouchsafed to throw much light, by means of his servant Elihu, on his purposes in visiting his faithful people with such afflictions as those of Job. It was "in a dream, in a vision of the night," that matters of this kind were wont to be revealed to those holy men of old, of whom

St. Peter testifies, that they inquired and searched diligently concerning the salvation of the soul, and prophesied of that grace which has come unto us. See 1 Pet. 1. 10. And it was by means like these, Elihu signifies, that he received this interpretation of such a case as that of Job. The life of man is spared in the midst of danger, or he is afflicted with pain, sickness, and wasting away, in order that either by the mercy of deliverance, or by the chastisement of affliction, he may be prepared for receiving the faith of a Redeemer, and may be led thereby to repent and to amend.

This appears to be the general purport of a passage, which is expressed in terms so general, that it has been explained in a great variety of ways. But to those who think that nothing more is here intended than the healing of the body, we would put the question of our Lord, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" Matt. 9. 5. We would at all events desire for ourselves, to see, in the messenger here spoken of, not any mere man or angel, but the divine Messenger of the divine covenant, the great Interpreter of God's will to man, who is described in the Song of Solomon as "the chiefest among ten thousand;" Song 5. 10; and by whom God has been pleased to declare, to reveal, and to make manifest unto us, "his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3. 26. This is He who pleads for us effectually: "Deliver him from going down to the pit." This is He who can truly say of the atonement made by his own blood, "I have found a ransom." This is He for whose sake, and through whose merits, it comes to pass, that if we confess our sins, God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1. 9. The healing of the body was the very miracle which He wrought most frequently, when manifest on earth in the flesh, by way of proof that it was He who came to save the soul. No wonder that this renewal of the flesh should be made a sign or type, in the Old Testament, of that renewal of the spirit which is the work of Christ revealed in the Gospel. Let us but attain to this, and what matter the tribulations of the present moment? What signified to Job the past anguish of his bones, when he was restored to health and to prosperity, and established in peace with God through Christ? What shall we think of any manner of affliction, which it may please God to lay upon us; what shall we say, but that it was good for us to be afflicted, when we shall have been brought thereby, if by God's grace we are brought in the end, out of this world so full of sorrow and perplexity into the light and life of joy everlasting?

*Elihu chargeth Job with having found fault with God.*

- 1 Furthermore Elihu answered and said,  
 2 Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.  
 3 For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.  
 4 Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.  
 5 For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.  
 6 Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression.  
 7 What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?  
 8 Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.  
 9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.  
 10 Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: Far be it from God, *that he should do wickedness*; and *from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity*.  
 11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to *his ways*.  
 12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.  
 13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world?  
 14 If he set his heart upon man, *if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath*;  
 15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

## LECTURE 815.

*God, being almighty, and all good, cannot do wrong.*

“Furthermore Elihu answered and said:” these words at the beginning of the chapter may with reason be thought to imply, that Elihu had made a pause for Job to answer if he wished it; and that then finding Job silent he proceeded. And now he addressed himself to others besides Job, and called upon the wise and the discerning to judge whether Job had not spoken rashly and wrongfully. This was the point on which Elihu very properly insisted. Instead of charging Job with faults which were imaginary, he plainly stated what he considered that Job had said; and he pointed out how unfit this language was to be applied to the most high God. Here indeed there was some risk of misrepresenting Job’s meaning, as he did not quote the words actually spoken. Job, however, made no complaint to any such effect. And probably therefore he considered, that in the height of his vexation he had been led to use expressions as intemperate as those with which Elihu charged him. We see then here what words of murmuring amount to, and what we shall ourselves hereafter feel that they amount to, if we are now tempted to indulge in them. It is as though we deemed ourselves righteous, and God not righteous. It renders us companions of wicked men. It



is as if we thought it of no use to delight ourselves with God, because we do not thereby gain at once all that we could wish.

If any such thoughts as these are harboured in our minds, if we ever murmur against that which God has ordered, and thus become guilty of these rebel thoughts, let us note how earnestly Elihu protests against the notion, that God can do any thing which is not altogether good. Far be from God wickedness, and from the Almighty iniquity. Instead of his administering happiness and misery without reference to character, Elihu declares, that "the works of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways." He then repeats a truth, too obvious to have been mentioned even once, if it were not that it is so often called in question by them that murmur, "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." He asks, "Who hath given him a charge over the earth?" as if there were any one superior to the Lord, to whom He must give account of what He does, any one who "hath disposed the whole world," which it is indeed God that does, and no one else. And he remarks, that if God were to think fit to recal the life which He has given us, all flesh must perish together, yea, the whole race of man must turn again to the dust at once.

It should be enough to humble man, to think that God could do this at any moment. \*It should be enough to make us abundantly contented, to know that God could at any moment bring us absolutely to nothing, and yet He does not. He could turn our bodies to the dust from which they were taken, and could also, if it should so seem good to Him, take back unto Himself that breath of life which He breathed into us; and man would cease to be a living soul. Our immortality, as well as our present life, is dependent on his will. For it is owing to his will that we are immortal. And though the miseries of this sinful world may sometimes make us glad to think, that "the sepulchre is nigh at hand," John 19. 42, still who that has the promise and the hope of everlasting life in heaven, who could bear that death should cut off soul as well as body, and make us altogether cease to be? From this dreadful annihilation God preserves us. And He is not such an one as man, that He should preserve us for any object save a good one. All powerful as He is, his goodness is equal to his might. And instead of reasoning like Elihu from his power, we shall be rather inclined to argue, according to the revelation of the Gospel, God's dealings must be righteous, because "God is love." 1 John 4. 8.

May we ourselves, weak creatures as we are, endeavour to imitate the pattern of his love! May love give us strength to fulfil all our duties, both towards God, and towards each other!

*Elihu adviseth Job to humble himself before God.*

16 If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.

17 Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?

18 *Is it fit* to say to a king, *Thou art wicked?* and to princes, *Ye are* ungodly?

19 *How much less* to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.

20 In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.

21 For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

22 *There is* no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

23 For he will not lay upon man more *than right*; that he should enter into judgment with God.

24 He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead.

25 Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth *them* in the night, so that they are destroyed.

26 He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others;

27 Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways:

28 So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth *his* face, who then can behold him? whether *it be done* against a nation, or against a man only:

30 That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

31 Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne *chastisement*, I will not offend *any* more:

32 *That which* I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

33 *Should it be* according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest.

34 Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me.

35 Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words *were* without wisdom.

36 My desire *is* that Job may be tried unto the end because of *his* answers for wicked men.

37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth *his* hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

## LECTURE 816.

*Nothing can trouble those to whom God giveth peace.*

Elihu argues justly, from the respect paid to kings and princes, that the most heartfelt reverence of language is due to Almighty God, before whom kings and their subjects, rich and

poor, are all alike. To speak as Job had spoken was to imply, that one governed who hated right, it was to condemn Him who is most just. It was to find fault with Him who created all men, and who can lay low the mightiest, and can bring to light the secret doings of the most subtle. He can discern our actions, thoughts, and words. He can expose the wrongs inflicted by the great, and put them to an open shame. He can hear the cry of the afflicted, and can give them that peace which shall enable them to say, "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

And shall any human being, great or small, old or young, wise or foolish, shall any human being dare to lift his voice against so great a God as this? Shall it be thought treason to speak against the majesty of kings, and yet be borne with that men should make question of the perfect justice and goodness of God? Shall we stand in awe of one another, and not much more stand in awe of Him? Shall we think it meet to maintain the dignity of our earthly sovereign, by laying down this principle of law, that the king can do no wrong, and yet hold it consistent with our paramount allegiance to the sovereignty of the most high God, to raise doubts as to whether his commands and dispensations are or are not just and equal? No, let us rather say, as Elihu here seems to teach us, I know that I deserve the worst that God can send, and am bound to bear it patiently; and instead of murmuring, I resolve that I will offend no more; instead of questioning the wisdom of that which I understand not, I pray God to instruct me; I promise God to do his will; and I pray that through his help I may understand his doctrine.

This is the kind of language which it becomes man to address to God. And whether we thus submit ourselves to Him or not, He will not submit his ways and will to our presumptuous scrutiny; He will not fail to rule and govern all, as He best knows to be both just and good. Let us therefore stay our minds on Him, and He will keep us in perfect peace. See Is. 26. 3. Let us hold fast to the conviction, that whatsoever God does or orders in heaven and in earth, must be right, that every doctrine and commandment of his word must be wise, and holy, gracious and good. We shall then have no complaint to make, no murmurs to repress. And whether it be from the world, the flesh, or the devil, that temptation besets us, and endangers the peace and prosperity of the soul, we shall be able still to say of God, with thankfulness, "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"



*Elihu insisteth on the irreverence of Job's words.*

- 1 Elihu spake moreover, and said, *oppressed* to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.
- 2 Thinkest thou this to be right, *that* thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?
- 3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? *and*, What profit shall I have, *if I be cleansed* from my sin?
- 4 I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee.
- 5 Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds *which* are higher than thou.
- 6 If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or *if* thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?
- 7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?
- 8 Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou *art*; and thy righteousness *may profit* the son of man.
- 9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make *the*
- 10 But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;
- 11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?
- 12 There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.
- 13 Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.
- 14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, *yet* judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.
- 15 But now, because *it is not so*, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth *it* not in great extremity:
- 16 Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge.

## LECTURE 817.

*If we trust in God, He will turn our mourning into joy.*

Elihu continues to press on Job's attention the irreverence, unreasonableness, and untruth, of the language which he had indulged in towards God, when speaking in the heat of his vexation. It amounted to maintaining, that he had been wronged by the Almighty, and was therefore more righteous than God. It sounded as if Job thought, that God was to gain advantage by his sufferings, more than Job had gained by any sin of his, whereby he could conceive that he had provoked them. Elihu therefore tells both him, and those for whom such language made him a fit companion, see ch. 34. 8, that nothing which such an one as man could do, whether in the way of sin or righteousness, could be either loss or gain to One who dwells on high above the clouds of heaven. Our wickedness is hurtful to ourselves. And our righteousness is our own gain. It is also profitable to our fellow creatures that we should obey God. And when we disobey Him, and do violence to each other, we wrong each other, though we hurt not God.

But though it thus appears, that almighty God cannot, properly speaking, have any thing to gain from the obedience or the sufferings of such an one as man, yet man has much to gain from God. Man, when in affliction, instead of crying out and complaining against his fellow man, instead of murmuring against God, as though He were like one of us to delight in doing evil, man, when in affliction would gain much, by lifting up his heart to God, and applying to Him with reverence and confidence as the Maker and the Ruler of all mankind. Yes we ought to flee to Him for refuge, and to cast our cares on Him, not as repining at that which He permits, but as remembering, that it is He who has made us the reasonable beings which we are, He who has given each of us a living soul, capable of choosing between good and evil, fit to be tried and proved, and to be refined and purified by proof and trial, and that He who has thus made us liable to suffer much, is ready, if we pray to Him with humility, to hear our cry, and to grant our prayers, and to turn our darkness into light, our groans of agony into songs of joy.

“Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.” Job had but to wait patiently, and to trust devoutly; and God would, in his good time, Elihu assures him, make it manifest that He judges according unto right. “But now, because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger;” because Job was wanting in this entire confidence that God is altogether just and good, it had seemed good to God to visit him with affliction. “Yet he knoweth it not in great extremity.” God would not take cognizance of Job’s fault severely. He would not prove extreme to mark what Job had said or thought amiss, for it is not his wont to do so unto any man.

Let us then commend our cause to God, with the most entire trust, that He is not only incapable of wronging any man, but is also merciful unto every man. Let us, in all the troubles which beset us, bethink ourselves of saying, “Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?” Let us call to mind how exactly this language of Elihu was realized long afterward in the case of Paul and Silas, whom God so greatly supported by his gracious presence, when they were cast into prison at Philippi, that at midnight they sang praises to his name. See Acts 16. 25. And whether our bonds be those laid on us by cruel men, or those imposed by our own oppressive passions, whether our darkness be ignorance of mind, or come of painful apprehension in the heart, that God is hiding the light of his countenance from us, still if we turn our thoughts and prayers to Him, as to One who is not only our Maker, but also our Saviour and Sanctifier, He will give us “songs in the night.”

*Elihu sheweth that God is just in his ways.*

- 1 Elihu also proceeded, and said, affliction ;  
 2 Suffer me a little, and I will 9 Then he sheweth them their  
 shew thee that *I have* yet to work, and their transgressions  
 speak on God's behalf. that they have exceeded.  
 3 I will fetch my knowledge 10 He openeth also their ear  
 from afar, and will ascribe right- to discipline, and commandeth  
 eousness to my Maker. that they return from iniquity.  
 4 For truly my words *shall* not 11 If they obey and serve *him*,  
 be false: he that is perfect in they shall spend their days in  
 knowledge *is* with thee. prosperity, and their years in  
 5 Behold, God *is* mighty, and pleasures.  
 despiseth not *any*: *he is* mighty 12 But if they obey not, they  
 in strength *and* wisdom. shall perish by the sword, and  
 6 He preserveth not the life they shall die without know-  
 of the wicked: but giveth right ledge.  
 to the poor. 13 But the hypocrites in heart  
 7 He withdraweth not his eyes heap up wrath: they cry not  
 from the righteous: but with when he bindeth them :  
 kings *are they* on the throne; 14 They die in youth, and their  
 yea, he doth establish them for life *is* among the unclean.  
 ever, and they are exalted. 15 He delivereth the poor in  
 8 And if *they be* bound in fet- his affliction, and openeth their  
 ters, *and* be holden in cords of ears in oppression.

## LECTURE 818.

*The constant superintendence of God's providence.*

The general argument of Elihu has been this, that God is infinitely greater than man, and therefore cannot be expected to account to man for any of his dealings. But though it is out of place for man to require this, yet God may vouchsafe to do it. And Elihu here purposes, in God's behalf, to shew how God is just in all his ways, notwithstanding all that Job had said and questioned to the contrary, in the extremity of his sufferings. And with this view he states the doctrine of God's righteous providence, not in the same language as Eliphaz, and Bildad, and Zophar had done, as if prosperity and adversity in this world were sure to follow on doing well and doing ill. But thus it is, that Elihu sets this doctrine forth: that "God is mighty," yes, almighty, Lord of heaven and earth; and yet "despiseth not any;" is not too high to take notice of the least of his creatures: "He is mighty in strength, and wisdom;" He is not only supremely strong, but also supremely wise, so that He well knows how to compass all his righteous and gracious purposes. "He preserveth not the life of the wicked;" He has not the same regard for them as for the good: "but giveth right to the



poor;" He takes care of the cause of those who might otherwise have no protection from oppression and wrong. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne;" He pays as much attention to their welfare as to that of the greatest potentates of the earth. "Yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted;" which words we may thus interpret: they are raised to a higher honour than that of any earthly throne, as it is written in the Book of Revelation, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. 3. 21.

And further, Elihu thus explains the ends for which God, in the order of his providence, dispenses affliction to his faithful servants. "He sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." This is his object in afflicting them. And this is a purpose which, as we all well know, is often answered by the visitation of affliction. And then how great is the gain of them that suffer for a time, and are saved to all eternity! "If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures." This was in those times the settled order of God's providence; that the latter end of such as these was blessed more than their beginning. "But if they obey not they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge." And if these things do not now uniformly turn out thus, we believe that they do so frequently, often enough to prove that God rules in earth as well as heaven; often enough to leave no room for doubt that whatsoever passes unrequited here will meet with ample retribution hereafter.

Thus then God brings it to pass, that whilst they, who when afflicted, will not turn and cry to Him, perish miserably, there are others to whom the season of affliction becomes an opportunity of growth in grace and of increase in divine wisdom. The one sort "heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them." They shew no sign of godly sorrow, when chastised for their sins. "They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean." Whilst in regard to the others, "He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression;" openeth their ears to understand, and their hearts to receive with faith the divine lessons which it is good for them to learn. Thus are the eyes of God ever over the righteous, alike when He prospers them, and when He chastens them. Thus is He always providing for their welfare, even when most He seems to hide away his face from them. And thus does He, by his providence, always impart to them the best of happiness in this present world, the happiness of using it to the most advantage with a view to the world which is to come.

*Elihu recommendeth Job to magnify God in his works.*

16 Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where *there is* no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table *should be* full of fatness.

17 But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee.

18 Because *there is* wrath, *beware* lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.

19 Will he esteem thy riches? *no*, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.

20 Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place.

21 Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.

22 Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?

23 Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?

24 Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold.

25 Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off.

26 Behold, God *is* great, and we know *him* not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.

27 For he maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof:

28 Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly.

29 Also can *any* understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?

30 Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea.

31 For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance.

32 With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it *not to shine*, by the cloud that cometh betwixt.

33 The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.

## LECTURE 819.

*The works of nature prove God to be almighty and unsearchable.*

Elihu having set forth a just view of God's dealings in his providence, assures Job that he might have been enjoying deliverance from his troubles, but for his not being yet humbled as he ought to be, and as we know that he soon afterwards was. See Ch. 42. 6. Instead of this, he considered that Job was undergoing "the judgment of the wicked;" it being indeed strictly true, that the chastisements which God dispenses to the best of men, are no more than a just judgment for their sins. Therefore, Elihu would have Job beware, and not further provoke the wrath of God by hasty and irreverent words. Else he might be overtaken by the death which he had so rashly wished for, and would wish then, when too late to escape, that he might find a ransom for his life. This language of Elihu might be useful to teach Job not to trust too much, as he appears to have been inclined to do, to the integrity of his past life. As it was possible that St. Paul, after preaching to others, might have become a cast-away himself, so it was possible for Job, and it was well that he

should know that it was possible, so to persist in hard thoughts of God, as to provoke his displeasure past forgiveness.

It is well then, as Elihu suggests, it is well to choose affliction rather than iniquity. It is well to resign ourselves willingly to that rod of chastisement, whereby God vouchsafes to teach the children of men. "Who teacheth like him?" Who, indeed, can compare with God in anything, much less presume to teach, instruct, or censure Him? Rather let us remember to "magnify his work, which men behold;" to praise Him with our lips, and to glorify Him in our hearts, for the proofs of his great power and goodness, which on every side surround us. "Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off." It needs no unusual ability, it needs no close examination of his works, it needs no exclusive attention of the mind to this or that particular branch of study; none of these things are needed, though each may greatly help, to impress on our minds the obvious conclusion forced on us by every object we behold, that God, who created all these things, "is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out."

Take, for instance, a thing with which all men are familiar, the weather and its changes, from rain to sunshine, from sunshine to clouds and storms. Shall we think that all this goes on of its own accord, without any one to order it, any one to originate it? Shall we view it with no eye but to our own convenience, complaining when it is otherwise than as we wish it, and thankful only when it falls out as we desire? Or shall we not behold in it continually the work of an almighty hand? And the more we watch it, and think of it, and study it, and find ourselves unable to comprehend any one of the many beautiful and wise arrangements by which the clouds are made to know their place, and the rain to fall in its due measure, shall we not regard it as a striking proof, that He who contrived all these things is almighty, infinite, and unsearchable? He it is, who not disdaining the least of his works, "maketh small the drops of water," fitting them to fertilize the earth. He it is, who rolling away the clouds, as though drawing aside the curtains of a tent, spreads out light for the covering of the sky, and makes it reach to the bottom of the sea. He it is, who controlling the most powerful of the elements, makes tempests to fulfil his righteous judgments. It is of Him that thunder speaks to man, and tells how great God is. The cattle too, instructed by his wisdom to know the coming storm, proclaim to us their Maker's might, and teach us, if we would but learn, to flee the wrath to come. And if these things, of daily occurrence in the world of sense, are so altogether past our understanding, how shall we think to comprehend all God's dealings with our souls? why should we desire more, in matters that are revealed not to sense but faith, why should we desire more than simply to believe?



*Elihu calleth on Job to consider God's wondrous works.*

- 1 At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place.
- 2 Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound *that* goeth out of his mouth.
- 3 He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth.
- 4 After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard.
- 5 God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.
- 6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou *on* the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength.
- 7 He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.
- 8 Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places.
- 9 Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north.
- 10 By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened.
- 11 Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud:
- 12 And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.
- 13 He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.
- 14 Harken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.
- 15 Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine?
- 16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?
- 17 How thy garments *are* warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south *wind*?
- 18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky, *which is strong*, and as a molten looking glass?
- 19 Teach us what we shall say unto him: *for* we cannot order *our speech* by reason of darkness.
- 20 Shall it be told him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.
- 21 And now *men* see not the bright light which *is* in the clouds: but the wind passeth and cleanseth them.
- 22 Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God *is* terrible majesty.
- 23 *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him out: *he is* excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.
- 24 Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any *that are* wise of heart.

## LECTURE 820.

*That God is unsearchable by man.*

The appearances presented by the weather, and the effects wrought by its astonishing changes, had been already dwelt upon

by Elihu, as proofs of the great power and skill of the Creator. Here he describes more particularly the awful strife of elements in a storm of thunder and lightning, and then turns to the mention of snow, which, as well as the small and great rain, is the result of God's power, the consequence of his word saying, "Be thou on the earth." Frost, also, and its effects upon the waters, no less marvellous to those who study them, no less incredible to those who never saw them, are ascribed to the same divine providence. And whilst man is hindered in many of his labours, and the beasts lie torpid in their dens, it is suggested that we in this change may be reminded of the hand which brings all these things to pass. And it is plainly stated, that all these things not only were at first created by God, but also are continually under his appointment, made to come and go, whithersoever He will, either for correction or for mercy.

"Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still and consider the wondrous works of God." Let us follow this counsel of Elihu. Let us consider how infinitely above all that we can conceive must be the might and majesty of Him from whose word all creation had its being. We know not, with all our study, and with the accumulated observation of all ages, we know not the actual composition of any single substance, we know not the complete cause or principle of any single effect. We cannot find the limit between the laws which God originally impressed upon the elements, and the commands which from time to time He gives them anew. We cannot say, in the chain of causes and effects, which is the last link we come to, when searching up to the first beginning in the will of God. We cannot explain the poisoning of the clouds in the sky, or the sense of warmth in our own persons, or how it is dependent on the changes of the atmosphere, or how the atmosphere itself, light of weight and scarcely to be felt, should form a bulwark round about our earth, bright as a molten mirror. How then shall we pretend to speak as if by searching we could find out God Himself? How shall we dare to utter such a thought, when there is not a word in our lips but He, without any telling Him, knows it altogether? Only this we may be sure of, "He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice." He is good as He is great; and though with Him "is terrible majesty," yet "he will not afflict;" "He doth not," as the prophet writes, "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Lam. 3. 33. It is not then for Him to give account even to the wisest of mankind. On the contrary, it is fitting for all mankind always to stand in awe of God.

Lord, let us both fear Thee for thy greatness, and also love Thee for thy goodness. Unsearchable as is thy wisdom, and thy ways past finding out, so also is thy love beyond all conception great, and thy mercy over all thy works.

*Jehovah answereth Job out of the whirlwind.*

- 1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,  
 2 Who *is* this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?  
 3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.  
 4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.  
 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?  
 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;  
 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?  
 8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb?  
 9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it,  
 10 And brake up for it my decreed *place*, and set bars and doors,  
 11 And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?  
 12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place;  
 13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it?  
 14 It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment.  
 15 And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.  
 16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?  
 17 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?  
 18 Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all.

## LECTURE 821.

*The ignorance of man ought to make him humble.*

There is in the style of all Holy Scripture an air of something more than human, a sacred solemnity, which distinguishes it plainly from all other writings whatsoever. But especially when almighty God is represented as speaking in his own person, the language rises to a degree of sublimity, appropriate, as far as human language can be, to the majesty of the divine character. Elihu, as God's minister, had prepared the way for the demonstration of power, with which it pleased God on this occasion to rebuke the murmurs of his afflicted servant. But the minister is now silent; and the Lord Himself condescends to speak to Job; and out of the whirlwind there now issue words spoken without lips, which we marvel how man could hear and live. Let us thank God, that these words have been written for our use. Let us read, and study them, with as much of reverent devotion, as if they were thus spoken in our ears by God.

“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without know-



ledge?" "Who is this?" We have but to call to mind what we are, and we shall see at once the foolishness of murmuring against God. "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." Whatever pains we take to prepare, we shall find it hopeless for man to answer God. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding." How are we here at once convinced of ignorance! How are we made to feel that we are but of yesterday, when further inquired of by the Lord, "Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" How are we here compelled to own, Lord, we know no more of this, than Thou hast been pleased to tell us! Lord, we of ourselves know nothing; oh make us in every thing content to learn, as Thou dost think fit to teach us! "Or," again, "who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb?" Who, Lord, save Thou! In thy almighty hands the whole expanse of ocean was but as a new born babe, for which Thou madest the cloud to be a garment, "and thick darkness a swaddling band for it." Thou gavest it its law, and didst set it its limit, and didst lay on it, as on an infant, its command, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Oh stay in us the swelling waves of pride! Subdue the storms of passion! And make us as little children submissive to thy will; O Thou who art our Maker, our Father, and our God!

It was when "darkness was upon the face of the deep," that "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Gen. 1. 2, 3. Man was not yet created, when the dayspring learnt its place; when it was sent round and round the world, and was prepared beforehand for the exposure of the wicked, to bring to light their deeds of darkness, to stamp them with their true character, and to withhold from them the darkness which they prefer to light. Man was not yet made when all this was provided. Man can neither do these things, nor say how they were done by God. Neither can man fathom the depths of ocean, nor know all the circumference of the earth, nor tell what is beyond "the gates of death," "the doors of the shadow of death." Go then, proud man, and if there be nothing else that thou canst know, know at least thine own ignorance. Know that thou knowest none of all these things, which God both knows, and brings to pass. Know that it is past thy power to discover what some of these things mean. And whatsoever thou meetest with beyond thy comprehension, either in God's works, or in his word, know that for all this it may help to make thee wise, if it help to make thee humble.

*Jehovah convinceth Job of ignorance and weakness.*

- 19 Where *is* the way *where* light dwelleth? and *as for* darkness, where *is* the place thereof,
- 20 That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?
- 21 Knowest thou *it*, because thou wast then born? or *because* the number of thy days *is* great?
- 22 Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,
- 23 Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?
- 24 By what way is the light parted, *which* scattereth the east wind upon the earth?
- 25 Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder;
- 26 To cause it to rain on the earth, *where* no man *is*; on the wilderness, wherein *there is* no man;
- 27 To satisfy the desolate and waste *ground*, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?
- 28 Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?
- 29 Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?
- 30 The waters are hid *as with* a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.
- 31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?
- 32 Canst thou bring forth *Maz*-zaroath in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?
- 33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?
- 34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?
- 35 Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we *are*?
- 36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?
- 37 Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven,
- 38 When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?
- 39 Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions,
- 40 When they couch in *their* dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait?
- 41 Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

## LECTURE 822.

*We may know God sufficiently to believe in Him, and love Him.*

If it be true that knowledge is power, it is no less true that ignorance is weakness. And when Jehovah out of the whirlwind demands of Job, whether he knows the secret of his mighty works, it is in order to remind him, that he, as a mere man, is not able to perform any one of all these marvels. Hast thou known?

is equivalent to Canst thou do? Hast thou known how to do these things, how to divide light from darkness, and to assign to each its place? Hast thou known how to treasure up the snow, and to reserve the stores of hail, how to find a passage for the flood, and a path for the lightning, how to supply abundance of rain, not only for the use of man, but also for the nourishment of each herb and shrub, that blossoms unregarded in the wilderness? Hast thou known the parentage of rain, dew, ice, or of the hoary frost, or canst thou bring them into being? Canst thou change the seasons at thy pleasure, altering the order of the constellations in the firmament, making the rain fall at thy bidding, and constraining the lightnings to come, "and say unto thee, Here we are?"

These things are evidently beyond man's power. God, and God alone, can do them. He who made our understanding what it is, has not given us a capacity for dominion, that can in any wise be compared with his own. To Himself He has reserved the government of the universe, the work of supplying all things living with plenteousness. To Himself He has reserved the secret of his power. And well may He challenge us to say, which one of all his works we can thoroughly understand, much less effectually do. We search blindly. God knows clearly. We grope as in the dark. He dwells in perfect light. We toil in weakness, and do little. He speaks the word only, and does every thing. We attempt not to extend our care and labour beyond the wants of ourselves, or of our race. He has all creation to provide for, and provides abundantly for all. And such is the profusion of his power, that He decks with plenty the desolate and waste ground, where no human being is, and supplies with food whole tribes of living creatures, to be the never failing food of other tribes. Know Him then we cannot, nor know his ways, in such sort as to do what He does, or to be fit to pass judgment on his doings. But know Him we may, in such sort as to fear Him, and to believe in Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. For behold, with all the might of our Creator He combines all the affection of a Father. And He has told us enough, both by his works and by his word, to give us the most full conviction, that alike in what He has revealed, and in what He has withheld, He does that which is most for our good.

O great Creator of the universe, we desire in all humility to magnify thy most holy name. Marvellous are thy works, far above out of our reach; and great would be our presumption to think that we can thoroughly comprehend even the least of all thy doings. How much less dare we so much as think of doing any one of them! No, rather with them we join to glorify Thee the Maker of all things, the Father, the Saviour, the Sanctifier of man!



*The instincts of several animals set forth.*

- 1 Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?
- 2 Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?
- 3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows.
- 4 Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn; they go forth, and return not unto them.
- 5 Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?
- 6 Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings.
- 7 He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.
- 8 The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.
- 9 Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?
- 10 Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee?
- 11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?
- 12 Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?
- 13 Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?
- 14 Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust.
- 15 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.
- 16 She is hardened against her young ones, as though *they were* not her's: her labour is in vain without fear;
- 17 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.
- 18 What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

## LECTURE 823.

*The thought of God's power ought to humble us.*

The habits of animals in general, and especially of those which are wild, foreign, rarely met with, and remarkable for strength or beauty, their manner of living and of continuing their kind upon the earth, are subjects so curious and interesting, that they have usually engaged the attention of many amongst the most able and learned of mankind. But after all our researches, it is surprising how far we fall short of full and accurate knowledge in natural history. There are still many points of importance to be cleared up. And scarcely any two of those, who have treated on such subjects, are agreed as to the number of the kinds of animals, or as to the best way of distinguishing one from another, much less as to the peculiarities in the form, and faculties, dispositions, and pursuits, of each distinct species. And to how few amongst men in general is even this imperfect knowledge con-

fined! How much the greater proportion even of those who inhabit a country so far advanced in intelligence as ours, know nothing of the structure and distinctive characters of any of God's creatures, except those immediately around them, if indeed they know any thing of these! And yet, which of the most ignorant amongst us all, will refrain, or at least will be checked by consciousness of ignorance, from discussing the most deep things of God, from questioning the wisdom of his dealings, and the justice of his dispensations?

It was to reprove in Job, and to reprove in us, this disposition to pass judgment on the wisdom of our Maker, that the Lord here sets forth the marvels of his workmanship, in some few among the many thousand kinds of living beings, to every one of which He has given its distinctive character, and preserved the same unaltered from the creation to the times of Job, and from the times of Job to ours, filling with living creatures the land, the waters, and the air; and contriving that whilst they increase and multiply, whilst they die and are succeeded by their offspring, and whilst there are perhaps no two creatures of any species exactly in all points alike, still each kind remains distinct from every other, and distinguishable by the very same characters and instincts which He impressed on each at the beginning. Well may we here say, in the language of the Psalmist, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!" Ps. 104. 24. Well may we learn, from God's power and wisdom in his works, to receive with meekness and humility the marvels of his word. Not to dwell on the multitude of his creatures, there is enough shewn in the creation of any one that is here mentioned, to confound the high thoughts, and to put to silence the foolish words, of the most presumptuous of mankind. And when we consider how little we now know of these few amongst the multitude of animals, and how infinitely the knowing every thing about all of them would fall short of creating a single one, instead of ever presuming to murmur against God, either in word or thought, we shall resolve as the Psalmist did, upon a review of the wonders of creation, "I will sing unto the Lord, as long as I live: I will praise my God, while I have my being." Ps. 104. 33.

Praise the Lord then, all ye his creatures. Praise the Lord, all ye works of his. Praise the Lord, for He created you. Praise the Lord, for He preserves your being. Praise Him, all ye living creatures. Praise Him, all ye children of men. Praise the Lord God almighty; through Jesus Christ his Son, the Redeemer of all mankind.

*The horse, the hawk, and the eagle, are described.*

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| <p>19 Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?</p> <p>20 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible.</p> <p>21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men.</p> <p>22 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.</p> <p>23 The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.</p> <p>24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.</p> | <p>25 He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.</p> <p>26 Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings towards the south?</p> <p>27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?</p> <p>28 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.</p> <p>29 From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off.</p> <p>30 Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 824.

*The ways of God in his works fit to humble our minds.*

Of all these striking appeals to the works of creation, as proofs of God's power and of man's ignorance, no one is so well known, or so universally admired, as this forcible description of the horse. The instincts of other animals are indeed set forth with the most exact fidelity, in few and lively words. But here we have a more full and perfect picture, and that of an animal with which we are all familiar, and to which all are more or less greatly beholden for the necessities and comforts of life. Oh shame to our evil passions, that we should ever abuse the strength, and speed, and spirit of a creature so wonderfully made, to the purposes of mutual destruction! Oh melancholy proof of the early prevalence of wars and fighting amongst us, that this most ancient record of the qualities of the horse should appertain to him chiefly as a war horse!

"Hast thou given the horse strength?" Strength to carry and to draw, strength for speed and for endurance, great strength in proportion to his size is the first thing to be noted in the horse. "Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible." The union of high spirit with timidity is another point peculiar to this animal, who, whilst he one while starts at trifles, at another time expresses, by his air and attitude, by his very neck and



nostrils, the most determined courage, the most tremendous power. "He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength." He seems conscious of possessing extraordinary vigour, and shews himself eager to use it in the service of his master, man. He enters into the spirit of whatsoever work we set him to do; and as if he were a warrior himself, "he goeth on to meet the armed men." Where is now the timidity that made him startle at a shadow? "He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword." And the same is true of those more appalling engines of warfare, which of late have for the most part taken place of "the sword," "the quiver," "the glittering spear and the shield." Still "he swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet." If it be, he cares not for it, he is glad to hear it. For "he saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." Inimitable description of God's most matchless handiwork! Who but He that made the creature could thus set forth the work of his creation? Whom but Him shall we praise and glorify, whilst we read the words which are written for our instruction in his book, or use the creatures which are made for our service in his world?

But lo! herein is another marvel, to confound our wisdom, and to humble our proud understanding, that God, who commands all men to dwell in peace as brethren, should have formed an animal with properties so helpful to the purposes of war? Can we explain how this has come to pass? Or why did He, who delights in the happiness of all his creatures, make such birds as the hawk and eagle, to live by inflicting death on others? Have they, like the horse, learnt warfare of mankind? And how is it that, whilst this noble animal is here described in the character of a war horse, it is likewise a chief characteristic of the sovereign among birds, that "her young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is she?" Here are instincts provided for a case, which, but for the sin of man, would never have happened. Here is a bird of prey ready to devour the slain, and an animal which enjoys helping man in the field of battle; and both prepared beforehand by Him, who has thus forcibly denounced all bloodshedding: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Gen. 9. 6. God gives; man abuses his gifts. God creates; man defaces and destroys. God foreknows wonderfully, and provides inscrutably; let man wonder and adore. God commands plainly, and forbids expressly; let man hear with all submission, and at all costs obey.

*Job owneth to his sinfulness, and resolveth to amend.*

1 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said,	4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.
2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.	5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.
3 Then Job answered the LORD,	

### LECTURE 825.

*How man is humbled, and God glorified.*

We see here the true argument of the whole book of Job; man humbled and God glorified. We see here all hard thoughts of God put to shame, all rash words spoken against God put to silence. We see the afflicted saint own himself to be a sinner. We hear him of whom God had testified that he was "a perfect and an upright man;" Ch. 1. 8.; confessing for himself before God, "Behold, I am vile." Let us pray that the study of this book may bring us to the like conclusion, as to our own case, may help to convince of sin the most upright amongst us, and may check, in those who are most disposed to justify themselves, all thought of being counted righteous before God, except for the sake of their Saviour Christ.

When God pronounced Job "perfect and upright," He nevertheless permitted him to be tried by Satan, and permitted him, when tried, in some degree to fall; so far, at least, as to speak angrily to his friends, and presumptuously towards his Maker. The utmost proficiency then attainable in this life is not inconsistent with our being liable to be tempted, and when tempted likely to sin. Herein is man humbled. Herein also is God glorified. For though we fall, God lifts us up; He convinces us of sin; He inclines us to repent; and in proportion as He teaches us to feel the remembrance of our sins grievous, and the burden of them intolerable, He kindles the affections of our hearts towards Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, to save his people from their sins. Sin may abound, but grace does more abound; and as grace abounds, it makes us the more alive to the abundance of the sin that yet remains within us. And still, for every fresh wound thus brought to light, there is in Christ Jesus a healing virtue, which all the sins of all the world cannot exhaust. Let us daily resort to it with faith; and repeatedly as we feel our need of healing, and are sensible of our cure, let us repeat, from our inmost souls, the apostolic words of praise and gladness, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. 9. 15.

The sin into which Job fell is here plainly described in the words of the Lord, "Shall he that contendeth with the

Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." It was for Job's murmurs under the weight of an affliction, the reasons of which he could not understand, that Jehovah here calls him to account. What he was afflicted for is not distinctly revealed. Indeed his error consisted in demanding as a right to have this made the subject of revelation. His afflictions he had borne with signal patience. But he fretted under the imputation of his friends, that they were sent to chastise him for some gross and grievous iniquity; and he could not bear with patience to find himself unable to give the true account of God's afflicting him. Hence he was led, from wrangling with his friends, to murmuring against God. See Ch. 9. 17; 10. 2, 3. Behold him at length sensible of the wickedness of such conduct, of the presumptuous vileness of such words. He is convinced of sin: "Behold," says he, "I am vile." He owns his sin to be without excuse: "What shall I answer thee?" He purposes immediate amendment: "I will lay my hand upon my mouth." He confesses that he has sinned repeatedly, and at the same time resolves that he will sin no more: "Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

It is important to observe, that when he is brought to this holy resolution, no one word had yet been spoken by Jehovah, in the way of satisfying the doubts, and clearing up the perplexities, discussed between Job and his three friends. Nor indeed is anything at all said afterwards by the Lord speaking out of the whirlwind, in regard to the main subject of discussion in this book; except that Eliphaz and his friends had not taken so just a view of the divine dispensations, as had been taken by Job. See Ch. 42. 7. The matter is left therefore as Elihu left it, that is to say, much in the same state as that in which Job himself had left it. And without having his wishes gratified, or his difficulties solved, Job is brought to feel, and own, how wrong he did, in urging them so discontentedly and irreverently. We must not think that we can at once gain our own ends by sinning, and set all right with God by repenting. He will have us know, that whatsoever He does or orders is good, because He does or orders it, and is to be by us not only submitted to, but chosen and preferred, as undoubtedly that which is best for us. And it is when we are brought to such entire confidence in our Maker, as to trust without reserve in Him, that all his commandments, all his dispensations, whether we understand the grounds of them or not, are infallibly just and good, then it is that man is effectually humbled; then it is that God is greatly glorified.



*Jehovah again chargeth Job with sin. Of behemoth.*

6 Then answered the LORD which I made with thee; he unto Job out of the whirlwind, eateth grass as an ox. and said,

7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 16 Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.

8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? 17 He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together.

9 Hast thou an arm like God? 18 His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? 19 He is the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.

10 Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. 20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play.

11 Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. 21 He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens.

12 Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. 22 The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.

13 Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. 23 Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.

14 Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee. 24 He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.

15 Behold now behemoth,

## LECTURE 826.

*That we all stand in need of God to save us.*

If we could hitherto have doubted as to Job's having used words most offensive to the majesty of God, no doubt ought to remain, when even after Job has confessed, and declared his purpose to amend, the Lord repeats the charge in language more express; "Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" This had been the purport and effect of the murmuring language which Job had uttered with his lips. This is what we should be guilty of implying, if we were ever tempted to find fault with that which God dispenses in his providence, or with that which He has revealed in his word. If thus we should transgress, let us not be surprised though after we have confessed our trans-

gression, and have firmly purposed to amend, God still often brings our sin to our remembrance. Let us be thankful, if whilst we are mourning for the past, and pressing forward to amend for the future, He vouchsafes to supply fresh topics to convince us, how wrong we do to doubt that He does all things right.

“Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?” Here the matter is put in a new light, to confirm Job in his convictions. If thou hadst God’s power, it is argued, then there might have been some ground for thee to question the justice of God’s dealings. Do then, if thou canst, as God does. “Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together: and bind their faces in secret.” These are things which God does daily. And when Job also could do things like these, then, as the Lord said unto him, “then will I also confess unto thee that thy own right hand can save thee.” To save ourselves, to justify ourselves, and to find fault with God, are, we see, all considered as one and the same thing; and all are shewn by God to be alike out of place in those who cannot in these instances compare with Him. Hence then let us learn how true it is, that unless we could be ourselves as great as God, we cannot fail to need Him for our Saviour.

Let us then again consider how great God is. Let us again dwell upon his greatness, as set before us in the greatness of his works. “Behold now behemoth;” an animal so far surpassing all the rest of the like order, in size, and strength, and majesty, that he is here called “the chief of the ways of God.” There have been found bones of the creature probably here signified, which are twice as large as those of the largest elephant; and from these parts of the skeleton we are enabled to conjecture how enormous the whole living quadruped must be. Further researches beneath the surface of the earth, or amongst its wilds and mountains yet unexplored, may perhaps throw further light on the description before us. And a behemoth dead or living may be met with, to add to the many proofs and illustrations contributed by science to God’s word, and to strengthen the conviction of God’s greatness forced on us by the contemplation of his works.

*Of God's great power shewn in leviathan.*

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| <p>1 Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord, <i>which</i> thou lettest down?</p> <p>2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?</p> <p>3 Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft <i>words</i> unto thee?</p> <p>4 Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?</p> <p>5 Wilt thou play with him as <i>with</i> a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?</p> <p>6 Shall thy companions make</p> | <p>a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants?</p> <p>7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?</p> <p>8 Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more.</p> <p>9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not <i>one</i> be cast down even at the sight of him?</p> <p>10 None <i>is so</i> fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?</p> <p>11 Who hath prevented me, that I should repay <i>him</i>? <i>whatsoever</i> is under the whole heaven is mine.</p> |
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## LECTURE 827.

*That God is irresistible and irresponsible.*

If there is much difficulty in determining what land animal is meant by the behemoth, there is no less in ascertaining what monster of the deep is intended by leviathan. Some indeed have been very confident that it is the crocodile which is here described; an animal of an amphibious nature, met with chiefly in the great river of Egypt, and never known to inhabit the sea at all. But it seems beyond question that the creature here described is an inhabitant of the ocean; for how else could it be said of the disturbance and foaming which he causes in the waters, "he maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment?" Ver. 31. And moreover the Psalmist clearly speaks of the same creature as dwelling and sporting in the ocean; when after saying unto God, "the earth is full of thy riches," he adds, "so is the great and wide sea also: wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships, and there is that leviathan: whom thou hast made to take his pastime therein." Ps. 104. 24—26.

But if leviathan be a creature of the sea, what creature is it? Much has been said to make it probable that the whale is meant, the largest of sea animals with which we are acquainted. But as far as observation has informed us, the whale is a creature of a peaceful disposition. And it is certain, that considering its size, it is very easily wounded and very frequently captured. And whether this had ever happened in the times of Job or not, we shall probably do right in considering, that the words spoken by the Lord on this



occasion are applicable in all times to all mankind; and that the great instance of creative power here described, is one of whom it might be said to men of any age and country, "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? Shall they part him among the merchants? Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish-spears?"

These questions cannot certainly be all answered, as is here intended, in respect to the whale. Nor perhaps is there any other known inhabitant of the waters at once so large, so fierce, and so hopelessly invulnerable, as to fulfil all the particulars which are set forth in this chapter. But what of that? Is there therefore the less force in the conclusion here drawn for our practical instruction: "None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me? Who hath prevented me that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine." This conclusion came with its full force on Job whether he were or were not acquainted with the leviathan here spoken of. If it mean a whale, it is not likely that Job had ever seen one. It may even be thought probable that he had never heard of one before. But he could take it on trust, from the description given him by the Lord, that such a creature there was, the work of his almighty hand. And he could reply with just reason, at the end of this account, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." Ch. 42. 2. If it be not a whale that is here meant, nor any known inhabitant of the ocean, but some enormous monarch of the deep, holding his almost solitary state, in tracts, and there are many such, where hitherto no enterprize of man has found a pathway through the waters, let us be content to take God's word for it, that such an one there is; so matchless and so fearless, so terrible and so powerful an antagonist of man, as that perhaps he has destroyed all whom he has encountered, and has suffered no mariner, however hardy, to return and tell of his existence. And if the creature of God's hand be thus irresistible, how much more, how infinitely much more, the Creator! How can any one dare to murmur against the will of Him, or to demand justice as for a debt due from Him, who can truly say of this and all his creatures, "whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine?"

*Leviathan is further described.*

12 I will not conceal his parts, joined together: they are firm nor his power, nor his comely in themselves; they cannot be proportion.

13 Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? 24 His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.

14 Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. 25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves.

15 His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. 26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon.

16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 27 He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.

17 They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. 28 The arrow cannot make him flee: sling-stones are turned with him into stubble.

18 By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. 29 Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.

19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 30 Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire.

20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. 31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.

21 His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. 32 He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary.

22 In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. 33 Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear.

23 The flakes of his flesh are 34 He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.

## LECTURE 828.

*That our adversary the devil is subject to God's power.*

Whatever the creature called leviathan may be, it is undoubtedly set forth in all its parts, and power, and comely proportion, as a real and living demonstration of the might of its Creator. Let us regard it as an accurate description of one that is as a king among the most mighty of God's works, reported to us by God himself. What should we have felt if some of our fellow-creatures had seen and had described a monster such as this?

How much more may we be filled with surprize and admiration, when we have the account from Him, who not only has seen it, but who also has created it!

The name which He has given it, *leviathan*, signifies, in the original language, something folded, or rolled up; and this would naturally lead our minds to a creature made after the manner of the serpent tribe. With a mouth fit to be called the portals of its face, it has teeth that are "terrible round about," scales so beautiful to behold as to be its pride, and so compactly put together, that not even air can come between them. Light, heat, and smoke, seem to issue, in the abundance of its vigour, out of its eyes, and mouth, and nostrils. In its neck it has unwearied strength; and such is its destructive power, that sorrow, the sorrow of those whom it approaches, is said to rejoice or triumph in its presence. It is distinguished by great firmness of flesh, and by great hardness of heart. Its attitude when it raises itself up, is calculated to terrify the mightiest. No weapon formed by man can hurt it. It cares neither for sword nor spear, neither for dart nor arrow, neither for iron nor for brass; no more than for the rocks on which its couch is spread in the mire at the bottom of the sea. Its movements cause a turmoil in the waters like to boiling, a foaming as of ointment, a pathway white and shining like a hoary head. It is not to be matched for might or fearlessness by any animal that can be met with on the land. It looks down with scorn on the most scornful; and as it is fierce among the fiercest, it is also proudest of the proud.

Upon a survey of this most formidable picture, we shall perhaps think that they have some reason on their side, who see in the *leviathan* a lively emblem of "that old serpent, called the devil." Rev. 12. 9. And this conjecture is rendered the more probable, by the words of the prophet *Isaiah*, spoken, as it should seem, not without some reference to the end of the world: "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish *leviathan* the piercing serpent, even *leviathan* that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Is. 27. 1. Let us with thankfulness remember, that it is no less true of our spiritual enemy, than of the most formidable foe we have on earth, that "He that made him can make his sword to approach unto him." Ch. 40. 19. One God, and one alone there is, Ruler over all. Though heaven be his throne, hell also is beneath his footstool. Satan, with all his might, and with all his malice, can do us no more harm than God allows for good. And with the Captain of our salvation at our head, and with the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit in our hands, we may boldly resist the devil; and he, fearless and furious as he is, will flee from us,



*Job, abhorring himself and repenting, is accepted of God.*

- 1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you *after your folly*, in that ye have not spoken of me *the thing which is right*, like my servant Job.
- 2 I know that thou canst do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee.
- 3 Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
- 4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
- 5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.
- 6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.
- 7 And it was *so*, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*, as my servant Job *hath*.
- 8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you *after your folly*, in that ye have not spoken of me *the thing which is right*, like my servant Job.
- 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.
- 10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.
- 11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

#### LECTURE 829.

*That we should count them happy which endure.*

The declaration of God's great might and glory ended, Job owns in all humility, his deep conviction that God can do all things, and must know all things. He then repeats the first words of the Lord's answer out of the whirlwind, "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?" see Ch. 38. 2; as though he would say, I am the man, I am he that has thus offended, but I am now made fully sensible, that in all my questionings and murmurings, I have "uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." I have spoken, I confess it, in language fit only for Thee, O God, to use, and such as Thou hast actually made use of, saying, "I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me." See Ch. 38. 3; 40. 7. All my former conceptions of thy greatness were faint, compared

with those which now occupy my mind, even as those of hearing compared with those of sight. No information previously derived from others, no former revelation made to myself, has ever wrought in me such deep conviction of thy greatness and of my own vileness, as this sight of thy glory which Thou hast now vouchsafed. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job being thus effectually humbled and made penitent, the Lord next addresses Eliphaz, and declares, that he and his two friends had not spoken concerning Him the thing that was right as Job had. This must refer to the chief point discussed between them; the friends of Job having done wrong to the attributes of God, in maintaining that none except the wicked are afflicted; and Job having held, as the truth really is, that the righteous often suffer even for a time, though he failed, in his own case, to derive the entire resignation which he might have done, from the hope of gaining thereby hereafter. The Lord therefore bids these three friends go to Job, and offer sacrifice for themselves, and says that Job shall pray for them, and that He will accept Job, and implies that He will also pardon them. And hereby we may conceive Him to teach us, that instead of wrangling with each other on points in which we differ, we ought to join in prayers and mutual intercessions, and so agree to walk together, according to his word, in the paths of peace and piety.

As to Job himself, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." It was "when he prayed for his friends," when he had thoroughly forgiven them, then God both released him from his sufferings, and doubled his former joys. His relations and acquaintances then came with presents to contribute to his wealth, and with genuine sympathy to weep over his past afflictions, and to rejoice in his returning prosperity. Let us, then, with St. James, "count them happy which endure." We have heard, as he tells us, "of the patience of Job," how meekly he at first submitted to the loss of children, goods, and health. And when under the agony of his distress, and under the false imputations of the friends that came to comfort him, he lost his temper, and became perplexed in his mind, and went so far as to murmur against God, we "have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." As long as Job suffered patiently he had peace. When he began to murmur he began to be unhappy. When he was brought to a more perfect state of resignation, by a more full discovery of God's greatness, he was made happier than he had ever been before. Let us, then, "count them happy which endure." James 5. 11.

*The Lord giveth Job twice as much as he had before.*

12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name

of the third, Keren-happuch. 15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even

four generations.

17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

#### LECTURE 830.

*The chief lessons which we learn from this whole book.*

On comparing the numbers of Job's cattle before and after his affliction, we find that they were exactly doubled by the blessing of the Lord. See Ch. 1. 3. Sons also and daughters he had now as many as before. And considering what pains he had taken that those whom he had lost by death should not be lost eternally, he might rejoice in them that were departed, as well as in those whom God gave him afresh. His life also was prolonged to a great length; so that when he died he was "old and full of days." And this was the latter end of him, who had once wished that he had never been born! Oh the folly of wishing otherwise than as God appoints! Oh the happiness of having God to overrule our wishes, to choose for us, and to teach us to prefer his choosing to our own!

Job had wished too that his words might be engraven on a rock. See Ch. 19. 24. God, who ordered otherwise, ordered better; fulfilling the wish of Job in the more enduring record of this written book. And what are the chief points of wisdom, which we learn from them? not those which Job and his three friends chiefly inquired after, but those on which both they and we chiefly needed information. We know but little better than when we began to read this book, whence sin and suffering originally proceed, why the severest sufferings are sometimes allotted to them that have sinned the least, or, what is still more strange, why such as these are sometimes allowed to fall into the most grievous sins. But this we have learnt, that questions such as these must be inquired into, if at all, by man, with the most profound reverence towards God. And whilst we have seen that He does not willingly afflict us, and that He is ready to forgive us, and gracious to reward our imperfect services; we have learnt also to believe implicitly, that though none of these things were visible in his dealings, yet seeing He is the almighty Creator of the universe, He cannot but be, beyond all question, perfectly holy, and just, and good.



## THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

1. 1—6.

*The happiness of the good, and misery of the wicked.*

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

### LECTURE 831.

*The psalms expressive of devotional meditation.*

The Book of Psalms is a collection of hymns, or short religious poems, adapted to be sung to music as an exercise of devotion. Most of them have titles prefixed, setting forth either the name of the writer of the psalm, or the person to whose charge it was committed to be sung, as well as in many instances the occasion of writing it. But though it is certain that these titles are of great antiquity, they are not to be considered as of the like infallible authority with the psalms themselves. In many of these titles there are found certain Hebrew words, about the meaning of which there is so much uncertainty, that they are not translated at all in our version of the Scriptures. There is reason to think that some of these words mean different instruments of music, and some signify different kinds or styles of poetry. There is the like difficulty in ascertaining what is meant by the word *Selah*, which occurs at intervals in several of the psalms, and which is in like manner left untranslated. Doubtless that of which it seems so hopeless to find out the real meaning, is something which there is no necessity for us to understand. And if after reading the variety of opinions urged on subjects such as these, we feel unable to come to any definite conclusion, let us turn to matters of deeper interest; and let us thank God for having made so much more clear, and so much less disputable, the things which belong to our eternal peace.

Although then the titles of the psalms may be obscure, the psalms themselves are in general perspicuous. For though many passages in the psalms are hard to be understood, these bear a small proportion to the great extent and amazing variety of the whole. The book taken as a whole is remarkable for the

clearness and simplicity of language, in which it sets forth God's might, and majesty, and love, and expresses man's weakness, and his wants, and his thankfulness unto God for the supply of them. This is indeed the peculiar feature of this portion of the Bible, that it not only instructs us by the way of history and prophecy, not only awakens us by means of warning and exhortation, but it also supplies us with a form of sound words, in which to express such prayers and praises, as the mind rightly instructed, and the heart duly awakened, cannot but long to utter before the throne of grace. God be praised for having thus given us patterns as well as precepts, to shew us how to praise Him and to pray to Him! God grant, that by the study of these sacred psalms, we may better learn to do as St. Paul resolved, to pray with the spirit, and to pray with the understanding also, to sing with the spirit, and to sing with the understanding also! See 1 Cor. 14. 15.

The first psalm begins, like our Lord's sermon on the mount, with the declaration of a blessing. And the whole psalm is on so comprehensive a subject, the blessedness of the good, and the misery of the wicked, that it may well be considered as purposely placed first by way of an introduction to the rest. The man here pronounced blessed, is he who avoids that which is evil, and delights in that which is good. He will not act upon the plan of those who live without God in the world, neither will he enter upon the course of those who are guilty of notorious sins, neither will he settle down in the society of those who are in the habit of scoffing at the faithful and devout. Nor is it enough that he renounces these evil ways; he also follows after holiness, he delights in the word of God, in studying its meaning, in believing its doctrines, and in fulfilling its commandments. The blessedness of such a man is a growth in holiness and happiness and meetness for heaven, vigorous and healthful, like the flourishing of a tree planted by the waterside. And like unto the abundance of its fruit, and the unfading beauty of its foliage, is his prosperity in all that he undertakes, being all undertaken according to God's will. Not such is the case with the ungodly. They may rather be compared to the chaff which is left to be scattered by the wind, or which is sentenced to be burnt with unquenchable fire. See Luke 3. 17. For though at present they may mingle, undiscerned by man, in the same congregation as the righteous, yet "the Lord knoweth them that are his;" 2 Tim. 2. 19; and the day of judgment is at hand, in which "the way of the ungodly shall perish."

It is one chief feature in the character of the righteous, as here portrayed, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." This may remind us, that there is one other special use of the Book of Psalms; besides serving for the expression of our prayers and praises, it



serves also for the expression of our devotional meditations. To meditate is neither asking God for what we want, nor thanking Him for what we have, nor glorifying Him for what we are hoping to enjoy. To meditate is to think and to reflect. It is to ponder with reverence and love, on the miracles of God's greatness and goodness set before us in his works and in his word. It is to reflect on our own vileness; how unworthy we are of the least of all God's mercies. It is to dwell on his threats for the awakening of our fear, on his promises for the enlivening of our hope, and above all, on the great manifestation of his loving us, for the kindling of our love. It is to commune with our own hearts in solitude, and yet to feel that we never are alone, and so rather to commune secretly with God. Thus "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide." Gen. 24. 63. Thus Joshua exhorted the people of Israel: This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Josh. 1. 8. Thus St. Paul exhorted Timothy, "meditate upon these things." 1 Tim. 4. 15. And thus the blessed mother of our Lord not only knew of the many marvels connected with his birth, but also "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2. 19. When thus we ponder on the things of God, whether our cold hearts want thoughts, or whether our quickened thoughts want words for utterance, the Book of Psalms will furnish us largely with words that breathe the spirit of devotion, and with thoughts that glow with warmth of thankfulness and love. Let us use them often for this purpose, and we shall find that they will greatly help us towards that which the Psalmist devoutly longed for, saying, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord: my strength, and my Redeemer." Ps. 19. 14, 15.



*The prevalence of Christ's kingdom against opposition.*

1 Why do the heathen rage, *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou that put their trust in him.

## LECTURE 832.

*The typical application of the Book of Psalms to Christ.*

Among the many wonders of God's providence, which prove that all things on earth are overruled for good by One who is infinitely wise, not the least is this, that He has contrived in many instances so to order the events of one age, as to make them prefigure those of another; so to dispense sorrows and successes, to individuals among the children of men, as to render the things which befall them in their lives, a kind of prophecy of those which would afterwards befall his own dear Son our Saviour Christ. This is that which we mean by saying, that any man in particular is a type of our blessed Lord, or that any event in any man's life is typical of some circumstance in our Lord's history. That there were many such under the Old Testament, we are well assured, by that which is revealed on this subject in the Gospel. And there is perhaps no single person, whose history is so frequently referred to in this light, as David; nor any single book of Scripture which we are warranted in thus applying typically to the labours and sufferings, to the warfare and the triumph of our Lord, to so great extent, as the Book of Psalms.

If we look at the divine poem before us in its application to David, we shall consider that it expresses his triumphant joy, when at length seated on the throne of Israel he was preparing to extend his dominion among the neighbouring heathen countries, to the full extent of the promised land, as originally revealed to Moses. See Num. 34. 1—12. Referring to the sure promises

of God, he knew that it was in vain for the kings of the earth to take counsel against him. He felt certain that the Lord would make light of their resistance to his will. He considered himself as fulfilling that which had been decreed in heaven, and which could not be by any means frustrated on earth. And going forth as he did to conquer, under the authority of his heavenly Father, he advised those whom he was invading not to provoke his wrath, but to submit themselves to that undoubted will of God, which he was appointed to proclaim, and execute.

But now see the sense in which the glorious company of the apostles understood at least one portion of this psalm. We read in the fourth chapter of the Acts, that when Peter and John had been imprisoned, and charged by the rulers of the Jews "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus," "being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Christ." Acts 4. 18, 23—26. When we consider who they were that spake these words, we cannot have a shadow of doubt as to the proper application of the words quoted from this psalm, to the resistance of the world against the kingdom of Christ. And when we consider the connexion between one portion of the psalm and another, we cannot hesitate to interpret all of it in relation to our Saviour. Or if we could, we should find St. Paul in another chapter of the Acts thus plainly applying it to Christ, saying, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Acts 13. 32, 33.

The resurrection of Christ was frequently insisted on by the apostles, in their teaching, as the great demonstration of his power. Thanks to their faithfulness in declaring it, thanks to their zeal in dying for the proof of it, we, inhabitants of a country then heathen in the extreme, are now the possession of Christ Jesus. Thanks then be to God, for having called us with a holy calling! Thanks be to his blessed Son, for vouchsafing to reign over us! Thanks be to the Holy Ghost, for our new birth and adoption as children of God! Oh let us demonstrate the power of Christ's resurrection by hearts set on things above, and by lives renewed after the pattern of our Saviour's, and by zeal for the enlargement of his kingdom, and by reverence, devotion, and affection to Himself!

*David, bemoaning affliction, professeth trust in God.*

¶ A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

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|---|--|
| <p>1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise up against me.</p> <p>2 Many <i>there be</i> which say of my soul, <i>There is</i> no help for him in God. Selah.</p> <p>3 But thou, O LORD, <i>art</i> a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.</p> <p>4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.</p> <p>5 I laid me down and slept;</p> | <p>I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.</p> <p>6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set <i>themselves</i> against me round about.</p> <p>7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies <i>upon</i> the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.</p> <p>8 Salvation <i>belongeth</i> unto the LORD: thy blessing <i>is</i> upon thy people. Selah.</p> |
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## LECTURE 833.

*The past mercies of God our plea for obtaining more.*

The Psalm which we last considered was probably composed on the occasion of David's establishment on the throne. Its expressions throughout are those of triumphant confidence in God. The psalm before us was written under very different circumstances, and in a very different frame of mind. Yet the mournful strain in which it commences soon gives place to an expression of trust in God. And he that at first utters his complaint before the Lord, of the numbers that rise up against him, declares almost in the same breath, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." Whether the believer have prosperity or adversity, it is but for a short time that his spirits are affected by the change in his outward condition. And though "no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous," Heb. 12. 11, yet every trial of our faith that can befall us, will, if we rightly use it, help to add unto our joy, as well as exercise our patience. We are told in the title that this is a psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son. Let us revert to the particulars of this painful history, as set down in the second book of Samuel. "There came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." 2 Sam. 15. 13, 14. A lamentable state of things, a father fleeing from before the face of his own highly favoured son, a king dethroned by his own subject, and afraid lest if he tarried he should suffer harm, and the people of his city should be slain! Yet David in his haste found time both to pour out his grief



before the Lord, and also to express his confidence of trust, as well as to pray earnestly for the help he trusted in. What trouble ought ever so to hurry us, as that we should not find time for prayer? What business was ever hindered, whose safety was ever endangered, by time spent in applying to God for help, and professing to Him faith in his assistance?

On comparing David's words with the case of our blessed Lord, we cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance between the sovereign of Israel, fleeing from Jerusalem in mournful haste, lest he should put the lives of his people in jeopardy, and the true King of the Jews, in aftertimes led forth from the city by his own subjects, and dying in order to save our souls. Many there were which said of Jesus in contempt, as He hung upon the cross, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him if he will have him." Matt. 27. 43. He, too, cried unto God with his voice, and could not but be heard. And in his death and resurrection were fulfilled the words which David speaks, of taking rest in sleep: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." A great mercy David reckoned it, that, surrounded as he was by enemies, he should be enabled to sleep in safety. A great miracle we may well esteem it, one of the chief of all related in God's word, that Christ, dead and buried as He was, and guarded with most watchful jealousy by his foes, rose again from death to life. Let us thankfully remember, that He was the first fruits of them that slept. Let us live after the pattern of his life, so that after our departure hence, we may arise with Him to life everlasting.

David was confident that he should have God's help, and confident that with it he should prosper. Yet at the same time he prays for it most earnestly, saying, "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God." And he pleads mercies received of old, as an argument for his obtaining more: "for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." The more we trust that we have God on our side, let us the more fervently pray for his assistance. The more He has helped us hitherto, let us plead with Him this very thing that He may continue to help us now. His office and attribute it is to save. Our privilege it is that we are allowed to say to Him, Lord, Thou hast already saved us greatly, therefore save yet further, we beseech Thee! And as Thou hast been pleased to make us, to redeem us, and to sanctify us, complete thy work in thy due time, and so deliver us from evil upon earth, that Thou mayest finally glorify us in heaven!

*David prayeth, exhorteth, and declareth his joy in God.*

To the chief musician on Neginoth, A psalm of David.

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| <p>1 Hear me when I call, O God<br/>of my righteousness: thou hast<br/>enlarged me <i>when I was</i> in dis-<br/>tress; have mercy upon me,<br/>and hear my prayer.</p> <p>2 O ye sons of men, how long <i>will</i><br/><i>ye turn</i> my glory into shame?<br/><i>how long</i> will ye love vanity, and<br/>seek after leasing? Selah.</p> <p>3 But know that the LORD hath<br/>set apart him that is godly for<br/>himself: the LORD will hear<br/>when I call unto him.</p> <p>4 Stand in awe, and sin not:<br/>commune with your own heart up-</p> | <p>on your bed, and be still. Selah.</p> <p>5 Offer the sacrifices of right-<br/>eousness, and put your trust in<br/>the LORD.</p> <p>6 <i>There be</i> many that say, Who<br/>will shew us <i>any</i> good? LORD,<br/>lift thou up the light of thy<br/>countenance upon us.</p> <p>7 Thou hast put gladness in<br/>my heart, more than in the time<br/><i>that</i> their corn and their wine<br/>increased.</p> <p>8 I will both lay me down in<br/>peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD,<br/>only makest me dwell in safety.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 834.

*Of adding prayer and piety to our confidence in God.*

On what occasion David wrote this fourth psalm is not known with certainty; but very probably it was during the time when he was cast out from Jerusalem, by the usurpation of Absalom his son. He calls on God in prayer, saying, "Hear me when I call." We must ask if we would have. We must seek if we would find. We must knock in order for it to be opened unto us. See Matt. 7. 7. "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness." We must regard God as Him that justifies us, if we would have his ears open to our prayers. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress;" David might refer to his many deliverances from the hand of Saul; we may think of God's calling us at the first out of the world into the Church, making us children of grace, translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son, keeping us out of many a temptation which might have been too strong for us, upholding us in many which would else have prevailed against us, when we have fallen lifting us up, and when we have been lifted up holding us upright; all these things we may make mention of, and say, therefore, O God, "have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer."

But he that prays must be ready in due season, and according to his station, age, and office, to exhort also. David appeals to those who were turning his glory into shame, exulting perhaps in his dethronement, and asks them, how long they would continue so to do, and to love vanity, to cleave to vain Absalom, and to seek after leasing or falsehood, a false allegiance to a traitor king. "O ye sons of men," says David. When we appeal unto each other, we may rather say, O ye who have been made children

of God. We may put each other in remembrance of our exceeding great privileges as Christians, and use these as a powerful argument against turning the glory of our Saviour into shame, and loving the vain pleasures of the present life, and deserting the truth of God for the falsehood of mammon. But know, we may add, "know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." It is one thing to be set apart as a Christian; it is another thing to be set apart by the Lord for Himself as a godly Christian. Privileges possessed are precious; but their value if not improved is of no avail to their possessor. His treasure is locked up; his talent is not improved; he has only so much the more to answer for: and when in the end he is inclined to call, Lord, Lord, what reply can he expect but such as this, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity?" Matt. 7. 23. It is well for us to call to mind not unfrequently these terrors of the Lord. There is a close connexion between "stand in awe" and "sin not." And when in solitude and darkness we realize the presence of the Lord, as we sometimes do far more effectually than in broad daylight and in company, when we feel Him to be actually present to our souls in all his divine majesty, we can scarcely conceive it possible, that at such a moment, and when under such impressions, we could venture to sin deliberately. But with fear we must ever combine truth; and we must offer the sacrifices of righteousness, as well as put our trust in the Lord. These two things also are most intimately connected, however vehemently men endeavour to dis sever them. They who take most pains to serve God diligently, will be the most deeply convinced of the necessity of putting their trust in Christ; and they who most truly believe in Christ, will be most earnestly desirous to offer unto God, for his sake, themselves, their souls and bodies, which is their reasonable service.

In the troubles of David, many would have recommended him to despond. But he persisted in trusting and praying, and hence derived joy and peace. There are many who take the like desponding view of our spiritual difficulties, and who are apt to be often saying, "Who will shew us any good?" But thanks be to God for his grace, there is much more of real piety amongst us than the world is willing to believe. He has lifted up the light of his countenance on many of us. There are many who, whether rich or poor, enjoy a gladness far better than that which comes of this world's goods, and who both lay them down in peace and sleep, with a thankful conviction in their hearts that it is God who makes them dwell in safety. A happy proof of confidence in his protection, seeing how like our sleep is to our death! May we often call to mind, as we lie upon our beds, who it is that can make us die as well as live in safety; who it is that can enable us to sleep in Jesus, and to awake in the likeness of his resurrection!



*David prayeth, and professeth faith in God's mercy.*

To the chief musician upon Nehiloth, A psalm of David.

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| <p>1 Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.</p> <p>2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.</p> <p>3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct <i>my prayer</i> unto thee, and will look up.</p> <p>4 For thou <i>art</i> not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.</p> <p>5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.</p> <p>6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.</p> <p>7 But as for me, I will come <i>into</i> thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; <i>and</i> in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.</p> <p>8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy</p> | <p>righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.</p> <p>9 For <i>there is</i> no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.</p> <p>10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.</p> <p>11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.</p> <p>12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him <i>as with a</i> shield.</p> |
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## LECTURE 835.

*Of praying for the fulfilment of God's righteous judgment.*

If this psalm was written, as is most probable, whilst David was suffering by the rebellion of his son, we may interpret it as shewing us, in a striking manner, his abhorrence of the sin, which had brought upon him this painful visitation. First he approaches God as a humble suppliant, praying earnestly, and declaring that his voice should be heard in prayer early in the morning, as a proof of his earnestness and anxiety to be heard. "For thou art not a God," he adds, "that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee." This implies that he knew he had been penitent, and believed that he had been forgiven. Else he would not have said, I will "direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." He would still have been overpowered with a sense of shame and confusion of face, in approaching the divine majesty, had he not trusted that God had blotted out his transgressions. But now he could draw nigh to God, foolish and wicked as he once had been, and yet say to Him, with entire acquiescence, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." And though his

lips had been once stained with falsehood, and his hands with blood, he could glorify the holiness of God, in his declared detestation of such practices, saying, "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man." Thus with his own lips did he justify that revealed will of God, against which he had been a grievous transgressor. Thus did he testify as against himself, that God's commandments, even those which he had most signally transgressed, were not grievous but good.

"But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." This had made all the difference with David, a sense of the multitude of God's mercy, united with a reverential fear. He still remembered his own sins; but he remembered them as instances in which God had been pleased to exercise his goodness in blotting them out from his book. Though God remembered them no longer, David so much the more frequently called them to mind, that the recollection might prove a salutary warning to himself, and a profitable occasion of giving glory to the Lord. But not so did his enemies regard them. It was their delight to cast them in his teeth. Even they, who as long as he had enjoyed prosperity, flattered him with their tongue, now proved by their malicious revilings, that there was no faithfulness in their mouth. And no doubt this was the burden of their reproaches, that he who had been so great a professor of godliness, had fallen into sins so gross; a favourite topic always with the wicked; an occasion which the ungodly gladly seize, to triumph, as they profanely think, over the cause of God and godliness, by dwelling on the lamentable fall of such as have avowed themselves servants of the Lord.

But let them not think to triumph long. Let them hear the words of the sentence which hangs over their heads, as expressed in the devout prayer of David: "Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee." Yes, we may call this a devout prayer, considering that David prayed for that which God had promised to do; for God had promised to bless the righteous, yea, and also to destroy the wicked. And accordingly our Lord teaches us to pray to God, "thy kingdom come;" though we know that the coming of that kingdom, for which He bids us pray, must be attended with the everlasting destruction of all those who shall be proved to be his enemies. Oh, let us then, as He teaches, at the same time pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matt. 6. 10. Let us pray that those who are now at enmity with God, may, before the day of judgment, be reconciled unto Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*David prayeth for mercy, health, peace, and triumph.*

To the chief musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith, A psalm of David.

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| <p>1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.</p> <p>2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.</p> <p>3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?</p> <p>4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.</p> <p>5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?</p> <p>6 I am weary with my groan suddenly.</p> | <p>ing; all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears.</p> <p>7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.</p> <p>8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity: for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.</p> <p>9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.</p> <p>10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed</p> |
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## LECTURE 836.

*The fearful end which awaits the enemies of the Lord.*

See here the depth of the believer's sorrows, when suffering under conviction of sin, and under the chastisements which God in his mercy inflicts upon sinners. Hear how earnestly David in these circumstances prayed, that God would not rebuke him in anger, nor chasten him in sore displeasure. Learn from him, thou sinner, that art suffering as he did, learn that it is allowed thee to plead with God thy weakness and thy pains, thy agonies of body or of soul. Richly as thou hast deserved the worst that God lays on thee, He will not be displeased at thy asking Him to shorten the time, and to spare thee the extremity of thy chastisement. He will not fail to hear thy prayer, if thou askest with faith, and in the name of Christ, saying, "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake." Neither will it be presumptuous to plead, as an argument for the continuance of life, that in death, and in the grave, there is not the same opportunity, as here in this present world, for thankful celebration of God's goodness. So that unless He spares sinners for a time, they may never be able to give proof of their true repentance and amendment, by a life of thankfulness and praise.

But, alas, where can we find penitents who weep as David did; whose couch is watered with their tears; whose eyes are consumed because of grief, and whose grief, as far as it is caused by their enemies, arises from the thought that they are enemies of God? Must we not here apply to our own times the words of St. Paul to the Philippians, "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Phil. 2. 21. We cannot, as the apostle would have us,



surrender all private feelings, and make them subservient to the love of our Saviour. We cannot as David teaches us, for surely we may thus interpret his words against his enemies, displace from our hearts all personal enmity, and hate only that which is at enmity with God; abhorring both in ourselves and others that which is evil, and also cleaving in both to that which is good. See Rom. 12. 9. We find it hard to say in this sense, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." We are more apt to take pleasure in the company of many who notoriously transgress, than to tell them plainly that we are friends of God, deeply obliged to Him for mercies infinite, sensible of the obligations we lie under to Him, and resolved to prove our sense of them, by not associating more than we can help with those, who in the obvious tenour of their lives avow themselves his enemies.

Whilst however we thus apply the words of David to ourselves, we must observe that in all probability they were meant to apply to the sufferings and triumph of our Lord. Certainly He has Himself applied them to Himself in part. For He has said, that the very words which He will hereafter say unto his enemies, are these which David here says to his: "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke 13. 27. Christ's sorrows then they are which are here set before us. The burden of our sins, which He bare in our behalf, is the grief to which these groans and tears refer. And the enemies here spoken of are they who will not have Christ reign over them, because they prefer to walk in their own evil ways. And that David spake these things by the authority of the Lord, that he was inspired in that which he spake when giving utterance to his psalms, we have his own express testimony, and it is to be found amongst his dying words: "David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." 2 Sam. 23. 1, 2. Let the workers of iniquity then beware. Let the enemies of the Lord, and they especially who prove their enmity to Him, by hating, persecuting, reviling, or ridiculing them that are his, let all such take warning from these inspired words; and know that it will soon be their turn to be ashamed and sore vexed, to be arrested in their career of transitory triumph, turned back, and put suddenly to endless shame.

Grant, Lord, if it be possible, that these thy foes may now, whilst it is time, turn and live. Now bring them to the shame and confusion of face of feeling and confessing their sinfulness. Be Thou glorified, if it may be, in their conviction and conversion. Or else, if they will persist in rebelling against Thee, be Thou glorified, if it must be, in their condemnation.

*David protesteth against a false accusation.*

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

- 1 O LORD my God, in thee do *that is in me.*  
 I put my trust: save me from  
 all them that persecute me, and  
 deliver me:  
 2 Lest he tear my soul like a  
 lion, rending *it* in pieces, while  
*there is none to deliver.*  
 3 O LORD my God, if I have  
 done this; if there be iniquity  
 in my hands;  
 4 If I have rewarded evil unto  
 him that was at peace with me;  
 (yea, I have delivered him that  
 without cause is mine enemy:)  
 5 Let the enemy persecute my  
 soul, and take *it*; yea, let him  
 tread down my life upon the  
 earth, and lay mine honour in  
 the dust. *Selah.*  
 6 Arise, O LORD, in thine  
 anger, lift up thyself because  
 of the rage of mine enemies:  
 and awake for me *to the judg-*  
*ment that thou hast commanded.*  
 7 So shall the congregation of  
 the people compass thee about:  
 for their sakes, therefore, return  
 thou on high.  
 8 The Lord shall judge the  
 people: judge me, O LORD,  
 according to my righteousness,  
 and according to mine integrity  
 9 Oh let the wickedness of the  
 wicked come to an end; but  
 establish the just: for the right-  
 eous God trieth the hearts and  
 reins.  
 10 My defence *is* of God, which  
 saveth the upright in heart.  
 11 God judgeth the righteous,  
 and God is angry *with the wicked*  
 every day.  
 12 If he turn not, he will whet  
 his sword; he hath bent his bow,  
 and made it ready.  
 13 He hath also prepared for  
 him the instruments of death;  
 he ordaineth his arrows against  
 the persecutors.  
 14 Behold, he travaileth with  
 iniquity, and hath conceived mis-  
 chief, and brought forth falsehood.  
 15 He made a pit, and digged  
 it, and is fallen into the ditch  
*which he made.*  
 16 His mischief shall return  
 upon his own head, and his vio-  
 lent dealing shall come down  
 upon his own pate.  
 17 I will praise the LORD ac-  
 cording to his righteousness:  
 and will sing praise to the name  
 of the LORD most high.

## LECTURE 837.

*Our duty, when we labour under false charges.*

We read in the book of Genesis, that after the fall of man, the Lord God said unto the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Gen. 3. 15. We find in the Psalms abundant evidence of this enmity. We not only find Satan at enmity with Christ, but also the children of Satan at enmity with those that are Christ's. And we are led to understand the case of David, at once as a type of what our Saviour endured in the way of persecution, and as an instance of what all faithful servants of God must expect to have to suffer.

To be falsely accused, is the trouble and annoyance particularly adverted to in this psalm. David probably alluded to the false charges which Saul had brought or harboured against him. He was positive that he was guiltless of the iniquity of treason against the life of Saul. So far from it, he had delivered, as he here mentions, him who without any cause was his enemy. 'This he had done twice; once at the cave of En-gedi, and once in the wilderness of Ziph. See 1 Sam. 24. 7; 26. 9. And therefore he could appeal with confidence to God, to judge him in this matter according to his righteousness.

How much more might the great Son of David, in after times, use language like to this which is now before us! How true was it of Him, that He delivered those who without any cause were his enemies! How true that they, for whose salvation He was content even to die, were found capable of reviling Him as He hung upon the cross; and have been found capable ever since of bringing false accusations against Him! Some lay it to his charge, that He is not the Saviour which He says He is. Others, and they are by far the greater number, accuse Him, that He is a hard Master, and find fault with his commandments as grievous. But the day is coming when all these shall be put to shame before Him. And they who have thought, spoken, or acted, in opposition to his will, and have persisted in so doing unto the end, will find a terrible retribution awaiting them, from that God who "trieth the hearts and reins."

If however such sufferings and contumely have been heaped upon our Lord, we must not be surprised to find, that his faithful disciples suffer in like manner, by unkind and false accusations. We must not be surprised if it happen to ourselves, to have things laid to our charge, of which we know that we are innocent. Let such charges, falsely brought against us, first lead us to a deep searching of our own hearts, that we may confess with contrition before God the many things of which we find that we really are guilty. Next let us be always ready to take pains to undeceive those who think us guilty, to explain the truth as far as lies in our power, and not to let our good be evil spoken of. See Rom. 14. 16. But if after all our pains, we fail in clearing up the matter, let us not fret under the wrong put upon us. Let us be content to suffer with Christ, in the hope that we may be also glorified together. Lastly, the more we suffer unjustly here, let us be the more thereby led to set our affections on things above, and to look forward with faith and hope to that fast approaching day, when the mischief of evil doers will fall upon their own heads, and when God will vindicate the just.



*David magnifieth God's power and goodness.*

To the chief musician upon Gittith, A psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth ! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ;
- 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ?
- 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
- 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all *things* under his feet :
- 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ;
- 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas.
- 9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth !

## LECTURE 838.

*That we are invited to reign with Christ in heaven.*

Yes, God's name is excellent in all the earth, though millions of mankind are not aware of it. Excellent is his name, and every where present his power, and every where manifest his wisdom and his love. No one thing there is in all the universe, which does not tell of the hand that made it. The greatest and the least are alike the works of God's creation, the objects of his care, and the proofs of his omnipotence. And out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, among the weakest and most helpless of beings, has He ordained strength ; children having been found to love God devotedly and to praise Christ heartily ; see Matt. 21. 16 ; and God having oftentimes appointed the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, as his apostle testifies to the Corinthians, see 1 Cor. 1. 27, and as our Lord Himself bears witness, saying, " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes !" Luke 10. 21.

But what honour is this to be put upon such as we are, that God should be honoured by man ; even though it were only the chiefest of full grown men, and not also babes and sucklings ; what honour is this to be put on man, that God should vouchsafe to be honoured by any of us, that He should be mindful of us at all, much more that He should be mindful of every one of us ! When we consider that even the heavens are no more than the work of his fingers, when we look above us, and behold the sun in the firmament, and when we find that no sooner has the sun gone down, than moon and stars become apparent, and distant worlds, invisible in the blaze of day, are opened to our view in the darkness of the night, when we think of their great

distance, and compute their size, when we compare their size with that of the earth which we inhabit, when we divide the earth into sea and land, and distribute the land into its quarters, and think of the small space which our own country occupies in the least quarter of the four, and then reflect what mere specks of space we occupy ourselves, on a very small portion of our country, truly we are lost in endeavouring to follow out the marvellous thought, that God, who made the universe, is mindful of every single human being, knowing all our thoughts, and providing for all our wants.

But not only is He mindful of us, He also visits us. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" He visits us. He holds communion with our spirits by his Spirit. He has visited us in the person of his Son. The Son of God has been made flesh and dwelt among us. He has brought life and immortality to light for us. He has given us superiority over all the other living creatures with which we are surrounded, not only in this, that they are subject to our strength and skill, but in this also, that when they perish, we endure. Many as are their present uses to us, and great as is God's goodness in making them subservient to our use, and largely as they shew forth the providential care, whereby He fills all things living with plenteousness, how much does it add to the devout thankfulness, which these his wondrous works excite in us, when we reflect, that He who made these things for our use in time, has made us for his service throughout all eternity!

But chiefly has God honoured man by the giving his own Son to be our Saviour. Chiefly for this ought God's name to be honoured, and God himself devoutly adored, throughout all the earth, for this, that these words before us were fulfilled, as we learn from the New Testament, in the person of Him "by whom also he made the worlds." Heb. 1. 2. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." Heb. 2. 9. We find these words of the psalmist quoted at length in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a proof that our blessed Lord was from the first higher than the angels; that He humbled Himself, and was made a little lower than them, in order to save us by his death; and that the Almighty Father had thereupon decreed to put all things in subjection under his feet. Let us then with joy and thankfulness reflect, that we are invited to be one with Him, one in exaltation, as well as in humiliation. If here we are bound to share his sufferings, we may expect to partake of his glory hereafter. And unworthy as we seem to ourselves of the notice of One so great as God, we have this sure word of promise from his Son, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. 3. 21.

*David both praiseth God and prayeth Him for deliverance.*

To the chief musician upon Muth-labben, A psalm of David.

- 1 I will praise *thee*, O LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare with my whole heart; I will among the people his doings.  
shew forth all thy marvellous works.
- 2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.
- 3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.
- 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.
- 5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
- 6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.
- 7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.
- 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
- 9 The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
- 10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
- 11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.
- 12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
- 13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:
- 14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.
- 15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
- 16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgsaion. Selah.
- 17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.
- 18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.
- 19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.
- 20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

## LECTURE 839.

*How God will befriend us against all enemies.*

This psalm contains first praise, and afterwards prayer; praise for deliverance already experienced, prayer for further interference on God's part, in behalf of his faithful people. It was evidently written after David had established the worship of God on mount Sion; mention being here made of that holy hill, as the



dwelling place of the Lord, where it was meet to shew forth all his praise. If therefore it refers especially to the victory which David gained over Goliath of Gath, as some have shewn reasons for thinking, it must have been composed long after the event to which it refers. This would shew how thankfully God's mercies were remembered by David for a long time afterwards. This would teach us how thankfully God's mercies ought to be remembered, and that for a long time, by us. And this may serve to make us ashamed, if we seldom or never call to our remembrance, much less openly commemorate to others, the chief instances of deliverance, whether temporal or spiritual, for which we own ourselves beholden to the bounty of the Lord.

Let us learn from David, when we praise God, to praise Him with our whole heart. And when we have been made acquainted with God's marvellous works, and find how much we have profited thereby to our souls' health and safety, let us with David resolve that we will shew them forth. Let us, when we are glad, rejoice in the Lord. When we are merry, and would sing let us sing the praises of the most High. Whether we have other enemies or not, we have a legion of spirits in league against our souls; enemies very powerful, subtle, and malicious. But we have a Friend more mighty than they; and glad it ought to make us, to be assured that they will turn from before his presence and power. Thankful we ought to feel, and thankfully we ought to speak, and sing the praise of Him who saved us, when we consider from what He has already delivered us, and how graciously He has promised to deliver us yet further. He is our sure refuge in times of trouble. He will not suffer the evil spirits to tempt us, beyond our power to resist and overcome, beyond the power which He gives and makes our own. And though they should stir up against us enemies on earth, still will God neither forsake us nor forget us. He will arise in his due time, and will make inquisition for blood. And those amongst mankind who oppress his people, He will make to know themselves to be but men. Whilst to those also in the world of spirits, who are our adversaries, He will declare in his due season, that the destructions in which at present they delight, are come to a perpetual end.

*The Psalmist protesteth to God against the godless.*

1 Why standest thou afar off,  
O LORD? *why* hidest thou thy-  
self in times of trouble?

2 The wicked in *his* pride doth  
persecute the poor: let them be  
taken in the devices that they  
have imagined.

3 For the wicked boasteth of  
his heart's desire, and blesseth  
the covetous, *whom* the LORD  
abhorreth.

4 The wicked, through the  
pride of his countenance, will  
not seek *after* God: God is not  
in all thoughts.

5 His ways are always grievous;  
thy judgments are far above out  
of his sight: *as for* all his ene-  
mies, he puffeth at them.

6 He hath said in his heart, I  
shall not be moved: for *I shall*  
never be in adversity.

7 His mouth is full of cursing  
and deceit and fraud: under his  
tongue is mischief and vanity.

8 He sitteth in the lurking  
places of the villages: in the  
secret places doth he murder the  
innocent: his eyes are privily  
set against the poor.

9 He lieth in wait secretly as  
a lion in his den: he lieth in  
wait to catch the poor: he doth  
catch the poor, when he draweth

him into his net.

10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth  
himself, that the poor may fall  
by his strong ones.

11 He hath said in his heart,  
God hath forgotten: he hideth  
his face; he will never see *it*.

12 Arise, O LORD; O God,  
lift up thine hand: forget not  
the humble.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked  
contemn God? he hath said in  
his heart, Thou wilt not require  
*it*.

14 Thou hast seen *it*; for thou  
beholdest mischief and spite, to  
requite *it* with thy hand: the  
poor committeth himself unto  
thee; thou art the helper of the  
fatherless.

15 Break thou the arm of the  
wicked and the evil *man*: seek  
out his wickedness *till* thou find  
none.

16 The LORD is King for ever  
and ever: the heathen are perish-  
ed out of his land.

17 LORD, thou hast heard the  
desire of the humble: thou wilt  
prepare their heart, thou wilt  
cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and  
the oppressed, that the man of  
the earth may no more oppress.

## LECTURE 840.

*The indignation which we ought to feel at the oppression of the poor.*

Whether this psalm were written by David, when smarting under Saul's oppressive treatment, or by some other inspired man in the times of the captivity, is a doubtful point. It describes a state of things unhappily not confined to either of those periods, not confined to any age or any country, not unfrequently to be met with amongst ourselves. Who has not known instances of the wicked in their pride persecuting the poor? Who has not felt how just it would be if they were to be taken in their own cruel devices? Who has not heard the wicked boasting of that

which ought to be their shame, the desire of their own evil hearts, and commending those who cherish that which God abhors, the love of money? Where can we go, and not meet with many who will not seek after God, in whose thoughts God is not at all? Grievous as their ways are to God, they think within themselves, that they shall never be moved. And as they scorn their enemies amongst men on earth, they set at nought also Him whom they are making their enemy in heaven. With oaths and falsehood, with mischief and vanity on their lips, they have cunning and cruelty in their hearts; and they care not what meanness they are guilty of, in order to get the poor into their net, and to make to themselves gain out of the weak and helpless. Such is, alas! the secret history of many a man's wealth. And the secret principle on which men venture thus to act is this, they say in their hearts, "God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it."

When we look around us, and see the multitude who, in a land of superabundant wealth, are destitute of food or clothing; when we reflect in how many instances their labour has not been fairly paid for, or they have been tempted to spend their hard earned wages in return for that which is nothing worth; when we see palaces of drunkenness built up with poor men's pence, and think of the many wives and children, the many widows and orphans, whose groans and tears form but a small portion of the misery on which that hateful splendour thrives; when we remember that snares of the same kind, though not all of like outside show, are set in every corner of the land, to catch the poor man by his baser appetites, and not only impoverish his substance, but at the same time injure his health, and greatly endanger his soul; we shall be inclined, when we think of such as thrive on gains like these, to apply the indignant language of this psalm, and say, "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thy hand." Let us know then for our comfort, that "the Lord is King for ever and ever." Let us be assured that these abominations, however little repressed, if not rather actually encouraged, by the mistaken laws of man, are absolutely prohibited by the laws of God. And let us not doubt, that though He seems to give impunity for a time to wickedness so hateful in his sight, He best knows how and when to put an end to evil, and He will not fail to avenge in due season the cause of the poor.



*David encourageth himself in God against threatened danger.*

To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

- 1 In the LORD put I my trust: heaven: his eyes behold, his eye-  
how say ye to my soul, Flee as lids try, the children of men.  
a bird to your mountain? 5 The LORD trieth the right-  
2 For, lo, the wicked bend *their* eous: but the wicked and him  
bow, they make ready their that loveth violence his soul  
arrow upon the string, that they hateth.  
may privily shoot at the upright 6 Upon the wicked he shall  
in heart. rain snares, fire and brimstone,  
3 If the foundations be de- and an horrible tempest: *this*  
stroyed, what can the righteous shall be the portion of their cup.  
do? 7 For the righteous LORD lov-  
4 The LORD is in his holy eth righteousness; his counte-  
temple, the LORD's throne is in nance doth behold the upright.

## LECTURE 841.

*How much the righteous may venture to risk and do.*

The title tells us that this is a psalm of David. And the contents make it highly probable that this psalm was written when the persecution of David by Saul was at the highest; and when the latter seemed disposed to overturn the foundations of law and justice, of every thing that was most sacred in the state and in the church of Israel, rather than not take David's life. At this juncture, it appears that some of David's counsellors had recommended him to take refuge in flight, and that at a time when he felt it his duty to abide within the reach of Saul. And therefore he replies to them, "In the Lord put I my trust." And seeing this was his resolution, he asks them, "how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" David's friends had both counselled him to fly, and had given him these reasons for their advice. They had urged the preparation made against his life by Saul, describing him with his bow bent, and the arrow ready on the string, wherewith to shoot privily at David. They had referred to Saul's arbitrary acts, setting all foundations of law at defiance. And they had perhaps especially pointed at his violence in slaying the priests of the Lord, that were at Nob, as instigated by the ill advice of Doeg.

Let us then hear the reply of him who has grace to put his trust in the Lord. Thus it is that he reasons against the threats of danger from the hands of evil men: "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." That is to say, however loudly men may threaten, however absolutely they may bear sway on

earth, and rule according to their own wayward will, instead of according to equitable laws; still there is One above who is the Ruler over all, One whose throne is heaven, and the universe his temple. And why should I fear what man can do unto me, provided I have this great and mighty God to decide according unto right? Who art thou, as the Lord spake in after times by the prophet, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" Is. 51. 12, 13. And in like manner our Lord enjoins us, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. 10. 28.

But David replies yet further, "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth." That is to say, these threats and dangers are permitted by God for the trial, exercise, and improvement, of the faith and love of them, who believe in God and love Him. And all the time that such as these are under affliction, they are also under the watchful care of the most High, with his arm to hold them up, and with the sense of his love to comfort them. But on the contrary, He sets his face against the wicked. And though He seems now to let them have their own way, this will turn the more to their harm in the end. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." So fully persuaded did David feel, that "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

Let this conviction be ours. Let us be assured that this is true, even as regards our present happiness, true even under the New Testament, which directs our thoughts chiefly to happiness in heaven. Still is this the rule given us by St. Peter: "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." 1 Pet. 3. 10, 11. And whenever we are tempted by danger to shrink from the performance of duty, whenever either man counsels us, or Satan suggests to us, to flee away like timorous birds, instead of quitting ourselves like men, whensoever in the prevalence of iniquity the question is pressed upon our minds, "what can the righteous do?" let us make bold to ask by way of answer, what can the righteous not do? What may not they succeed in, who walk by faith, who work by prayer? What dangers may not they defy, what undertakings may not they accomplish, who trust in God for safety and for help, and who aim, in all their doings, not to please themselves but Him, not to increase their own reputation, but to glorify God's holy name?

*David shocked by the abundance of iniquity, appealeth to God.*

To the chief musician upon Sheminith, A psalm of David.

- 1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set *him* in safety from him that puffeth at him.
- 2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: *with* flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak. 6 The words of the LORD are pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
- 3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh proud things: 7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
- 4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? 8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are
- 5 For the oppression of the exalted.

## LECTURE 842.

*That God will preserve the good though surrounded by evil.*

We have been warned by our blessed Lord, when speaking of times not unlike to those which David here describes, that "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matt. 24. 12. And we learn from David's words, that at such seasons, and under the pressure of such painful thoughts, it is our wisdom to appeal to God, it is our privilege to pray to Him for help, it is our comfort to be assured by Him that He will keep those who trust in Him, and preserve them from the power of the wicked one. And thus also has our Lord assured us for our comfort, that however largely iniquity may prevail, and may make the love of many wax cold, still "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matt. 24. 13. Most comfortable assurance! most gracious encouragement! more especially when He, who promises us salvation if we endure, also promises to give us help unto endurance, grace sufficient for us, strength made perfect in our weakness; so that it is not our frailty that can make us fall, provided only we can pray, and can believe, and can be willing to depend on help from heaven, instead of trusting in ourselves.

We cannot truly say of our own times, at least not in our own country, that "the godly man ceaseth," or that "the faithful fail from among the children of men." Rather we ought to own with thankfulness, that the grace of God has been signally manifested in raising up amongst us to a great extent a spirit of true piety, faith that is not ashamed to avow dependance on a Saviour, and love that spares no labour and no cost, in doing good to man, and glorifying Christ. But if piety abounds, iniquity abounds also. Iniquity abounds, and glories in its abundance. It is not ashamed to make itself manifest. Together with the increased activity of



good, there has been developed an increased activity of evil. An increased publicity has been given to the daring words of infidelity, and to the abominable practices of iniquity. Think of all the idle, wicked, and blasphemous words, which go up from among us to the ears of God; how worldly, how falsehearted, how corrupt, and corrupting, is the language that issues daily from the lips of thousands amongst us! Well may we say of such as these, "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Think of the multitudes who practically hold the profane principle here forcibly expressed, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" Well may we fear, that in such as these will be fulfilled this dreadful sentence, "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." The open, public, unblushing avowal of independency on God, the assertion that not only our lips but all our parts, and powers, and possessions, are our own, to do with as we like, to enjoy freely all the pleasure we can make them yield us, without having to answer unto any one for the use of them, and the resting all obligations of ordinary morality, as of truth, honesty, industry, sobriety, and purity, simply on the expediency of practising these virtues for our own personal and mutual convenience, these are indeed fearful signs of the present times, these things are fearfully like unto the description which David gives us of the times in which he wrote.

But the truth is, that the Holy Spirit of God, describes here, by the mouth of David, a state of things, which is to be met with more or less, at various intervals, in all ages of the world. Whether we can or cannot tell to what precise period in the history of the Israelites these words originally related, we can have no difficulty in applying them, for our own warning, against principles and practices deep rooted in the pride and wickedness of our corrupt nature, and therefore apt, under any favourable circumstances, to spring up, and flourish, and bear their noxious fruit. But in the midst of the vain talking of the unbelieving and the proud, it is our privilege to be assured, that "the words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." We have these words of his written for our guidance in his book, and preached for our more general and effectual instruction by his ministers. Thence we learn, oh never may we forget the lesson, that neither lips nor hands, neither faculties nor possessions, are our own; that we must account for the use of all to One who is Lord over us; that He will not suffer the poor to be oppressed with impunity; and that to whatever extent the wicked may abound, and the vilest men may be exalted, He will keep in safety those whom the worldly treat with scorn, He will preserve them from the generation of the wicked for ever.

*David mourneth, prayeth, and resolveth to rejoice.*

To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?	I sleep the <i>sleep of death</i> ; 4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, <i>having</i> sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?	5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
3 Consider <i>and</i> hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest	6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

### LECTURE 843.

*That our religious affections ought to be lively.*

The best of men will hardly fail to experience great vicissitudes of feeling, great changes as to spiritual joy and sorrow, in the course of their earthly pilgrimage. And we need not be surprised to find David, within the compass of a single psalm, first mourning under the apprehension of being forgotten by the Lord, and afterwards resolving to sing unto the Lord, because of the bountiful dealings experienced at his hand. Something there is in the constitution of most of us, which does not allow of our maintaining an uniform flow of cheerfulness and joyfulness of spirits, however little ground we may have for ceasing to rejoice. And most of us have in truth much reason to be oftentimes sorrowful. For we ought to feel godly sorrow as often as we commit sin. And we ought to long for such a lively sense of God's presence and his love, that we should feel as if we were forgotten by Him, whensoever He does not make us and keep us sensible of his being with us to guide us and support us, whensoever He is even for a single moment forgotten by us.

Perhaps David wrote this psalm under a keen sense of sinfulness, or perhaps he wrote it under a lively impression of his need of a more spiritual state of mind. It might be when he was persecuted by Saul, or when he was displaced by Absalom. Or it might be when he was on the throne and in prosperity, but feared that his soul prospered not. The enemy whom he refers to might be man, or might be Satan. But in any case, his grief arose from his feeling himself forgotten by the Lord, and the joy which he soon afterwards experienced, was a rejoicing in God's loving kindness. And by what means was the one feeling changed into the other? What is the connecting link which we meet with, between the sad beginning and joyous ending of this psalm! It is prayer. The mourning of David appears to have been turned into joy, upon his praying unto God, and saying,



“Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.”

Let us then observe how deeply David felt the apprehension of God's having forgotten him. Let us hear how earnestly he pleaded that his life would be endangered unless God vouchsafed the light of his presence. And then let us consider whether we are used to experience any such comfortable persuasion of God's caring for us as is here intended, any such distress at the thought of his ceasing to care for us, as is here expressed. There are certainly many to whom these expressions of distress must seem by far too vehement, these feelings by far too excited. There are many who repeat these words habitually in the service of the congregation, “How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?” and who yet have never felt any such sorrow at all, who never grieve at all to think that God is hiding away his face from them. Neither do they ever rejoice in his salvation, however frequently they may join with others in saying, “I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”

Now certainly this insensibility to religious affections cannot be right. If we have any friend on earth whom we dearly love, we could not feel at ease to behold averted looks in the countenance which used to beam on us with pleasure. How then can we be indifferent as to whether God is caring for us, unless it be that we do not love Him devoutly? Again, if we consider how great a privilege, and honour, as well as pleasure it is, to have One so great and good as God caring for us, thinking of us, providing for our wants, both temporal and spiritual, and encouraging us to think that He is doing so; we shall suspect ourselves with reason of being wanting in faith, of not believing that He ever does any such things, if we can at any moment be at ease under the apprehension that He is not so doing then. Nor, once more, can we be trusting as we ought in the mercy of the Lord, if we do not rejoice from the heart in his salvation, if we never feel a degree of joy in the thought of God's forgiving us, loving us, sanctifying us, and glorifying us, a joy more lively, a happiness more precious to our souls, than any that any thing in this world can afford.

May God quicken in us those affections towards Him which He sees to be lifeless, and strengthen those which He knows to be weak; and whatever cause we have for sorrowing in the dread of his hiding his face from us, may He give us much more cause to rejoice in the conviction that He is dealing bountifully with us!



*David declareth the depravity of the natural man.*

To the chief musician, *A psalm of David.*

- 1 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.* They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good.*
- 2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God.*
- 3 They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*
- 4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as they eat bread,* and call not upon the LORD.
- 5 There were they in great fear: for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.
- 6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD *is* his refuge.
- 7 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and Israel shall be glad.*

#### LECTURE 844.

*The children of men and the children of God distinguished.*

Observe, it is "in his heart" that "the fool" here spoken of "hath said," "There is no God." It is not the avowed infidel or atheist that is here chiefly intended. It is not the man who attempts to maintain openly that God is not, this is not the character here especially denounced. The words refer to a case much more common, namely, to that practical infidelity, which consists in living as if there were no God, in living without God in the world, and in so living, because whilst the lips acknowledge his existence, the heart has no real faith in Him at all. And so David goes on to describe the kind of infidels he refers to: "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." And yet there have been always some ready to say with their lips, that there is a God. But not so, in their hearts. For "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." These, it seems, were the words which God spake, on looking down from heaven "upon the children of men," to see if there were any that did know Him, and seek after Him.

Of what times then were these words spoken, and of which generation of mankind in particular? Do they fit only the times of David, or do they apply to a period subsequent to his, that of the Babylonish captivity? Or must we look back to the world before the flood, when "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;" Gen. 6. 12; and find in that remote period the fulfilment of this awful description? Or must we turn to the age in which the Gospel was first preached, and to which St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans applies these words and others like to them; and

suppose that they were never realized, except in the abominations which prevailed at that season in the Gentile world? See Rom. 3. 10—18. No, rather we may conclude justly that this is a true picture of the sight which meets the holy eyes of God, whensoever He looks down, and when does He not do so? from the heavenly glory in which He dwells, on this disordered world of ours. At whatever time He looks, and in whatever direction He searches among "the children of men," still his sentence is the same, "there is none that doeth good;" and still the nourishing principle of this depravity is unbelief in the heart; the secret whisper there heard and harboured, that "there is no God."

But in the same psalm which testifies to this godless infidelity of the natural man, mention is made of God's own people, whom the workers of iniquity in their ignorance of God, "eat up," or persecute and destroy. Mention is made of "the generation of the righteous," amongst whom "God is," who say in their hearts that there is a God, and who prove in their lives, to the dismay of evil doers, that they believe that which they profess. Mention is made of the poor, whose refuge is the Lord, and whose counsel and wisdom in cleaving unto Him, is a matter of shame and scorn with the godless. Mention is made of these faithful and devout men, in the very same breath with the declaration, that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And the account of such seeming inconsistency is this, that they amongst whom God sees no one seeking Him, are "the children of men," and those, who constitute the generation of the righteous, are children of God.

The psalm then applies to all ages of the world; for in all ages there have been these two classes of mankind. In the family of our first parents, there was a Cain and there was an Abel. At the time of the flood, when "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," there was a Noah, and his family, not counted as carnal but as spiritual, saved in the ark from perishing by water. When the posterity of Noah had nearly all become idolatrous, there was an Abraham, an Isaac, and a Jacob, there was a people of Israel, baptized in the sea and in the cloud; see 1 Cor. 10. 2; and privileged to be called the people of God. And now, since the salvation of Israel has come out of Zion, there is a baptized people, called Christians, born again as God's dear children, amongst whom, as He looks down on them from heaven, we know that He sees some who understand and seek Him, some who by the help of his Holy Spirit do good, and do it abundantly. But, Lord, alas, how few! How few there be that know Thee as Thou art, and seek Thee as they ought to do! How many of thy people are still in captivity, bondsmen of sin! Oh that the salvation which has come to them, may not have come in vain! Oh that it may come to many more than it yet has reached unto, and that all they to whom it comes may have cause to rejoice therein to all eternity!

*David stateth who shall dwell in God's holy hill.*

*A psalm of David.*

1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

#### LECTURE 845.

*The character of them that shall be saved.*

The "tabernacle" was a kind of moveable temple, a tent made after a pattern revealed to Moses in the mount, and consecrated to the uses of divine worship. The "holy hill" means the hill of Zion, the site of the temple, chosen for that purpose in David's time, and we may consider it as conveying to us in this passage the notion of the temple itself. The tabernacle then, being moveable, may be taken to represent the church on earth, the company of faithful men during the period of their pilgrimage. The temple being fixed or stationary may, in like manner, be regarded as an emblem of the church triumphant in heaven. And thus the inquiry, with which this psalm commences, will mean, Lord, who is fit to continue a member of thy church on earth? who shall be for ever a member of thy church in the world which is to come? Important questions; most important, most deeply interesting to us all; questions which we ought often to ask of God, with a view to knowing how far we are now fit to enjoy our present privileges, how far we are being made meet to partake of our expected immortality. But we have in this psalm not only the questions but the answer. We have an account given us, by inspiration, of several particulars in the character of those who were fit, under the dispensation of the Law, for membership of the church of God. And we may with reason consider it as setting before us dispositions and practices which God is no less sure to approve of under the dispensation of the Gospel.

"He that walketh uprightly:" this means strict consistency, holding right principles, maintaining them stedfastly, and living up to them conscientiously. "And worketh righteousness." This is added for fear we should substitute profession for practice; and it may remind us of that which St. John teaches us in his first Epistle, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." 1 John 3. 7. "And speaketh the truth in his heart." This is the only security we can have for speaking the truth with our lips. This is speak-



ing the truth where God hears us, and it implies the being sincere with Him as well as with each other. "He that backbiteth not with his tongue." A grace of rare attainment, and the practice here denounced one to which we are continually tempted. So sure a way is this of pleasing many hearers, if we speak censoriously! So apt is this to please ourselves, if, by finding fault with others, we in the comparison exalt ourselves. "Nor doeth evil to his neighbour." Which we may do in many ways, besides speaking evil of him behind his back. And from all ways and means of hurting one another we must watchfully abstain. "Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." No, not though others lay it down before us ever so conveniently, and we are ever so much tempted to take it up, and carry it about with us, or from one to another; no, we must not take it up. And this will silently reprove others who are disposed to backbiting, and will make it no longer so pleasurable a sin, if they who offer the reports of slander find fewer who are willing to receive them. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." To honour men, or to think light of them, not according to their rank, wealth, or ability, but chiefly according to their piety or the lack of it, this argues that we honour God, this shews that we really are expecting to see his faithful servants lifted up from lowest poverty to a crown of glory, in the day when many of those who have been most highly esteemed among men will prove to be most vile in the estimation of God. "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not;" does not violate his engagement, whether he have sworn to it or not, upon finding that it will turn to his loss, but holds that to keep his word is greater gain than any thing which he could ever get by breaking it. "He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent:" two other cases in which the thirst for gain tempts many to do wrong; and in which He who would abide with God must stedfastly do that which is right.

"He that doeth these things shall never be moved." He shall abide in the Lord's tabernacle; he shall dwell in God's holy hill; not stranger like to visit there, but to be there at home continually. "He that doeth these things," these and others of the like kind. "He that doeth these things," doeth them by the grace of God; doeth them in the faith of Christ; doeth them out of a desire to glorify the holy name of his Redeemer; doeth them without trusting in the doing of them; doeth them to the utmost of his power; doeth them, and when he has done all, owns that he depends for every thing on his Saviour. "He that doeth these things shall never be moved." He shall not be put away from among the faithful upon earth. He shall never cease to reign among the saints in heaven. Heaven has with him almost begun on earth. And when he shall hereafter, like his Lord, ascend up on high, it will but be from grace to grace, from glory to glory.

*David foresheweth the resurrection of Christ.*

Michtam of David.

- 1 Preserve me, O God : for in a goodly heritage.  
 thee ~~do~~ I put my trust.
- 2 *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, thou art my Lord : my goodness *extendeth* not to thee ;
- 3 *But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.*
- 4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that hasten after another god* : their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.
- 5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot.
- 6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places* ; yea, I have *there are* pleasures for evermore.
- 7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel : my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.
- 8 I have set the LORD always before me : because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope.
- 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
- 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

## LECTURE 846.

*Our interest in the prophecies of Christ's resurrection.*

St. Paul, speaking to the men of Israel at Antioch, quotes this psalm, in proof that the resurrection of Jesus Christ had been foretold by David. See Acts 13. 35. St. Peter had done the same thing, more at length, when preaching to the Jews at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. After repeating the latter portion of the psalm he thus applies it: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." Acts 2. 29—31. Thus we have twofold authority for understanding the latter portion of this psalm as a prophecy of Christ's resurrection from the dead. And more particularly, in St. Peter's words, we find ground for understanding many passages of the Psalms with a like application to our Saviour. For it seems that David spake prophetically in his own person, as Christ's representative or type, because of God's having assured him, with the solemnity of an oath, that Christ should descend from him, and sit upon his throne. And this impression was likely to be on his mind on many other occasions besides this; and might be the means by which the Holy Spirit brought it to pass, that so many things in the Psalms of David apply, first to the circumstances of his own case, and next to events in our Saviour's life, or to doctrines of his Gospel.

As to the application of this psalm to David, he first begs of God to preserve him, and declares that he puts his trust in God. Then by way of proof of his trusting in God, he expresses the conviction of his soul, that he has nothing of his own to trust in; he has no goodness fit to offer to God's acceptance; he is aware of this, he is ready at all times to own it. And though he feels that he can do nothing really serviceable to the Lord, he does what good he can to the Lord's people; to the excellent, in whom is his delight. He notes how grievous is the case of those who hasten after any other god, and renounces all participation in their sin. He avows that he, for his part, has the Lord for the portion of his inheritance, and that he wishes for no other. It was a lot which was both profitable and pleasant, and which left him nothing more to be desired. He blesses the Lord for having given him the wisdom to choose it, and to abide by the happy choice. And in the stillness of the night, when he communed with his own heart, he states that he had the testimony of his conscience that his lot was excellent.

Thus far perhaps David's words applied in the first instance to himself. But they apply also, in some measure, to our blessed Saviour; who, inasmuch as He was man as well as God, prayed earnestly, and trusted faithfully, and might well ascribe his perfect goodness to his union with the divine nature, and had such joy in the portion set before Him, that for the sake of it He endured the shame and pain of the cross. And we know that the remainder of the psalm applies most exactly to our Saviour's case. He it was, who being at once God and man, had the Spirit without measure, and could not be in any thing moved from the steadfastness of his purpose, or from the perfectness of his joy. He it was who rejoiced to know assuredly that his body, when dead and buried, would not remain in the grave; that his soul would not be left in the regions of the dead, but that the path of resurrection would be pointed out to Him, and the way of ascension into heaven. But though these words do most strictly and properly apply to Christ, we cannot but think that David, as he prophetically wrote them, knew that he had himself some interest in their meaning. And we cannot but rejoice to know, that Christ was the first fruits of an abundant harvest; and that we like Him, have ground to trust in God, and to rejoice and glory in the hope, that when we die we shall not die eternally, when we lie down to rest in the grave, we shall soon arise from corruption to incorruption. We have been made God's holy ones, sons of his, elect, precious, heirs of immortality, citizens of heaven. The path of life has been pointed out to us, the entrance into heaven has been opened. And it must be our own fault, if, when Christ has gone before to prepare a place for us, we follow not after to share with Him the fulness of joy in God's presence, and at God's right hand "pleasures for evermore."



*David prayeth God to defend him from his enemies.*

A prayer of David.

1 Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence ; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing; I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.

4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me* from the paths of the destroyer.

5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not.

6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God : incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.

7 Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against* them.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow

of thy wings,

9 From the wicked that oppress me, *from* my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.

10 They are inclosed in their own fat : with their mouth they speak proudly.

11 They have now compassed us in our steps : they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth ;

12 Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down : deliver my soul from the wicked, *which* is thy sword :

14 From men *which* are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, *which* have their portion in *this* life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure* : they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

## LECTURE 847.

*How the wicked are a sword in the hand of God.*

Happy is that man, who when he prays to God, can conscientiously say, that his prayer “goeth not out of feigned lips!” Happy is he, whose conscience testifies, that upon God’s proving him, and trying his heart, no wilful sin would be found harboured there ! David could thus confidently appeal to the heart searching God ; being most fully purposed that he would not transgress in the words of his lips ; and having been also enabled, by means of God’s word, to keep himself from the paths of the destroyer, in respect to the works of his hands. If, like David, we can venture to appeal to God from the false judgments of man, and from the false accusations of Satan, let us be aware that we shall still need to pray earnestly to God, as David did, beseeching Him to hold

goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not. Men often think that it is scarcely possible, without presumption, to aim at purging a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man. But the truth is, that there is no possibility of succeeding in this object, except by the most deep humility, and an entire renouncing of all trust in our own strength, and most perfect reliance on our Saviour.

David states to God that he had called upon Him, and proceeds all upon Him yet further. He entreats God to shew his marvellous loving kindness, addressing Him as One who is ready to help all who put their trust in Him. He begs of God to preserve him with the care and tenderness with which the eyeball is protected, and to hide him under the shadow of the almighty wings from his deadly enemies who compassed him about. He then mentions the way in which these enemies beset him, describing them as proud and thriving persons, who were tracking him as if they were hunting a wild animal, or like lions seeking for their prey. And beseeching God to disappoint these malicious men, he speaks of them as the sword of the Lord, the instrument of chastisement wielded by his hand, whom He allows in the wisdom of his providence to prosper in this life, reserving their judgment for the life which is to come.

This is a striking view of one use to which wicked men are put by the almighty God. They are his sword to destroy each other, and to chastise his faithful servants when they need correction. The sharp sword they certainly prove oftentimes. But, God be praised, it is wielded by One who is a tender Father to his rebellious children, and who will not suffer the malice of wicked men to rob us of our lasting peace. "Deliver my soul from the sword, which is thy sword." Though we see the hand of God in any oppression or persecution which is brought upon us by wicked men, though we know that it is God's hand which wields this cutting sword, still we may pray God to deliver us from it, we may ask Him to spare us in his mercy that which we in our sinfulness have provoked. Only after every such petition let us say, "Not my will, but thine be done." Luke 22. 42. And whether it seems fit to spare us now or not, let us feel most thoroughly persuaded, that the time is short, and our sleep in Jesus nigh at hand, and that when we wake up in the resurrection, with bodies glorified like unto his glorious body, and with souls conformed to the pattern of his, all our past tribulations will be swallowed up in eternal joy, and we shall be infinitely satisfied with it.

Thanks be to Thee, O God, for assuring us in thy word, that thou carest for us, and watchest over us, and wilt redress, in thy time, all that amongst us which is wrong! Grant, we pray thee, that we thy servants in the mean while may make it our constant study to do, and say, and think always, that which Thou hast said is right!

*David praiseth God for deliverance from all his foes.*

To the chief musician, *A psalm* of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day *that* the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

1 I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

2 The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

3 I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet.

10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.

12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail *stones* and coals of fire.

14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22 For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.



## LECTURE 848.

*The graciousness of One so great as God in fighting for man.*

This psalm occurs in nearly the same words, towards the conclusion of the second book of Samuel. See 2 Sam. 22. At that period of his history, David had been delivered both from the hand of Saul, and from the rebellion of Absalom. He had also then been rescued, by the loving kindness of the Lord, from the power of those most grievous sins, into which he had fallen through the malice of the devil, and through the snares of his own heart. Most suitably therefore does he begin this strain of triumphant praise with saying, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." Most seasonably may his words remind us of that duty, which St. John has urged upon our attention, to love God because He has first loved us. See 1 John 4. 19. God has been to us, and is to us, and is willing to be to us for evermore, all that He was to David; a Protector from all evil, a Defender from all enemies; One who hears our prayers when we cry out in our distress, and who delivers us, because however little we deserve it, He vouchsafes to take pleasure in us. And oh! what grace, what mercy, what marvellous condescension, is this in Him to love us, seeing how great He is! How beyond all our power to explain it, is the mystery of the love which He manifests towards us, seeing what irresistible strength He can employ, if He so thinks fit, in the cause of his faithful servants! Thus storms and tempests have been used to be from of old his messengers to fulfil his will. And perhaps in every instance of a sinner rescued from Satan's bondage, there is an exercise of the might of the Most High, which these awful demonstrations of his terrible majesty can but faintly shadow forth to us. Our enemies are too strong for us. But God is also too strong for them. And all the terrors of the most frightful storm, here so vividly portrayed, are probably no more than God knows how to work in the world of spirits, as easily as in the world of sense, for the discomfiture of the devil and his angels. Let us remember, that we have no reason to expect God thus to deal with us in mercy, and manifest his terrors to our enemies, except according to our righteousness, according to the righteousness which is ours by faith in Christ. If we sin, and repent not, if we put not our whole trust in the merits of Him who did no sin, we have no part nor lot in this matter. But if we believe in Him who justifies the ungodly, if we both believe, and through faith love to obey, then have we, like David, the great God of heaven on our side, and we may then join with David to sing a song of thankfulness to God for deliverance from all our enemies.

*David foresheweth the triumphs of the Gospel.*

25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

30 *As for* God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

31 For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

32 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

38 I have wounded them that they were, not able to rise: they

are fallen under my feet.

39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them*: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.

44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

46 The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47 *It is* God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people unto me.

48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

## LECTURE 849.

*That we may share Christ's joy in the growth of Christianity.*

St. Paul, writing to the Romans, quotes the words of this psalm as a proof that it was one object of the mission of Jesus Christ, "that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." Rom. 15. 9. And the words which he quotes are these, "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name." Hence we learn that the victories here celebrated by David, over the heathen round about him, were types of the progress of Christ's Gospel. It is in making that blessed truth to spread over the face of the earth, that God manifests the attributes here ascribed to Him. It is in this holy work that He forwards the undertakings of the upright, and resists those of the froward. In this He humbles the proud, and gives success to the despised. In this He makes the martyr at the stake more powerful than the wrath of his oppressors, and enables them that suffer for the truth's sake to light a candle by their martyrdom, which not all the fury of their enemies is able to put out. Would we then do God service in this blessed work? Let us learn to undertake it in dependence upon Him. Strength, swiftness, and stability in our work, all must be sought for at his hands. And it is only by the weapons which are supplied out of his armoury, that we can fight successfully the bloodless battle of truth with falsehood, of peace with strife, of holiness with the abominations of iniquity.

In thus applying the words of David to ourselves, we must by no means forget that they apply rather to our Saviour Christ. Only as David appropriated to himself beforehand the triumphant expressions of his Saviour's joy, so may we, after they have been in part fulfilled, and whilst they are in part fulfilling. Yes; if it is our privilege to be one with Christ, and to have Him to be one with us, we ought especially to enter into that chiefest of the joys which He feels as the Redeemer of the world, the joy of vanquishing sin and Satan, the joy of subduing idolaters, and of rooting out their false gods, by rooting out their false worship, and by making them true worshippers of the One only living and true God. Let us rejoice in every instance of success like this. Let us do all that in us lies to promote it. And let us be assured, that besides the influence of our prayers and of our gifts, we may help largely by the holiness of our lives. It is by the manner in which Christians live that the heathen chiefly hear of Christ. And when Christian people generally shall live more as Christ would have them, then we may expect to see more abundantly fulfilled these words which David spake beforehand in his name: "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me."



*David discourseth of God's works and of his word.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmaments sheweth his handywork. right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

3 *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. 10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey comb.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. 14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

8 The statutes of the LORD *are*

## LECTURE 850.

*Christ is the manifestation of the glory of the Father.*

Because we have the inestimable privilege of possessing God's written word, we are apt to neglect the important and impressive teaching of God's created works. The psalm before us would lead us to give to each of these its due attention. It commences with a statement of the lessons to be learnt from the visible heavens; and thence it turns to a most animated account of the uses of "the law of the Lord." Our thoughts are at a loss, when we endeavour to illustrate the clear, beautiful, and forcible language, in which the inspired psalmist has here treated of both these glorious subjects. We can think of nothing that will not rather weaken than strengthen the effect of what he says, when he tells us how "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." Let us then frequently contemplate these familiar objects of creation, with a view to the proof they set before us, of the glory and skill of their Creator. Let us listen to each day and night, as they successively return

to us, and tell us how great, how good God is. Tongue though they have none, yet plainly they proclaim to all the world, that the hand which made them is divine. Let us listen attentively to their voice. And when we behold the sun, coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a giant to run his course, let us consider his bright beams as so many lines written to remind us, that all the light and heat he gives us come from God.

How easy is the transition of the psalmist from the sun, from whose heat nothing is hid, to the law of the Lord, from the power of which nothing is withheld! It is for all its proper purpose "perfect," for all its proper work infallibly "sure." It can convert the soul. It can make the simple wise. It is "right," not like man's erring wisdom; and it can rejoice the heart. It is "pure," not like man's unholy thoughts; and it can enlighten the eyes. It is an object of fear, or reverential obedience, and it will endure for ever. It is the rule by which God will judge the world, and his judgments are true and righteous altogether. How highly then ought this precious word to be prized! How much ought the use of it to be enjoyed! How profitable might we find it for our warning; how helpful to the attainment of our exceeding great reward! But, alas, when we think of its perfection, how are we convinced of our own frailty! How countless do our sins appear, when confronted with this all comprehensive rule of right! How do its just demands on us, for all our works, and words, and even thoughts, compel us to have recourse to God, in prayer for pardon and for grace! How do its strict requirements lead us, through conviction and contrition, to the cross of Christ, and oblige us to feel with thankfulness, that we have no other way of pleasing God, except by the atonement and mediation of Him, who is at once our strength and our Redeemer! "Christ," says St. Paul, "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. 10. 4. We have the authority of the same apostle, derived from the same chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, for holding that Christ was had in view in the psalmist's description of God's works, as well as in his meditation on God's word. For he applies to the preaching of Christ's Gospel that which is here said of day and night, "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Rom. 10. 18. Christ then is, as the prophet Malachi describes Him, "the Sun of righteousness." Mal. 4. 2. Christ is, as He has said of Himself, "the light of the world." John 8. 12. In Him not only is the Father's glory manifest, but also "the express image of his person." Heb. 1. 3. Oh that we may see it, and rejoice! His "goings forth" have been not only "from the end of the heaven," but "from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5. 2. Oh that there may be nothing in any of our hearts, that would either shrink from the bright shining of his light, or be dead to the warm influence of his love!

*David instructeth the people to pray for him.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

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| <p>1 The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.</p> <p>2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.</p> <p>3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.</p> <p>4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.</p> <p>5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up <i>our</i> banners: the</p> | <p>LORD fulfil all thy petitions.</p> <p>6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.</p> <p>7 Some <i>trust</i> in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.</p> <p>8 They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright.</p> <p>9 Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call.</p> |
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## LECTURE 851.

*Of putting our trust in the right quarter.*

It is generally considered that this psalm refers to the war in which David was for some time engaged against the children of Ammon and the Syrians. For it is mentioned in the history of the second book of Samuel, that when in the course of this war the Israelites gained a great victory, "David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen." 2 Sam. 10. 18. This shews us how great an armament of chariots and horsemen had been marshalled against Israel on this occasion. And it is highly probable that some such armament is referred to by the psalmist, when he says, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

And here it is important to observe, that the kings of Israel were forbidden in the law to multiply to themselves this valuable animal; see Deut. 17. 16; so that it appeared the more difficult for them to prevail against an army, in which horses were extremely numerous. We find no mention of horses in the description of Abraham's wealth, see Gen. 24. 35, nor in the accounts of the wealth of Isaac, Gen. 26. 14, and of Jacob. Gen. 32. 5. Neither are horses mentioned among the riches of Job, see Job 1. 3, though the book contains a most remarkable description of the war horse, shewing that it was not unknown at that period. Neither do horses occur amongst the spoil of the Midianites, as recorded in the book of Numbers. See Num. 31. 32. But it is in Egypt that we first hear of horses. It was with their horses, as well as with their sheep and oxen, that the Egyptians purchased corn of Pharaoh. See Gen. 47. 17. In Egypt too we find Joseph privileged to ride in the chariot next after that of



Pharaoh, see Gen. 41. 43; this shewing that horses were then used for purposes of draught. It was in his chariot that Joseph went out to meet his father, and to welcome him to Egypt. It was after sojourning in Egypt, that the aged Israel in his dying words made use of a figurative expression taken from the practice of riding horses. See Gen. 49. 17. And it was over the defeat of an Egyptian army, or rather on its entire destruction by God's miraculous interference, that Moses and the children of Israel sang praise to God, and said, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Exod. 15. 1.

Bearing these remarks in mind, we shall better understand the terms of the law already referred to, as binding on each Israelitish king: "he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." One great object of the law was to prevent traffick with Egypt, to cut off communication with a people, from whom there was great risk lest the Israelites should learn the abominations of idolatry. And if we turn on to another chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, we shall have further light thrown on this law by the following exhortation: "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Deut. 20. 1. Here then was a constant exercise of faith, and of dependence upon God, that He was One who could save as readily by weak means as by strong. And here was a perpetual remembrance of that great miracle, which God had at the first wrought for his people Israel, in delivering them, defenceless as they were, from all the chariots and horsemen of the Egyptians.

And now we shall see the force of this topic, which David suggested, amongst others, in the psalm which he supplied for his people to use, as a supplication for their king's success. Indeed all the topics of the psalm are connected with this one; and all combine to impress on us this truth, that in order to be safe, our way is not to lean upon outward means of safety, but to trust in the support of God. If but He hear us, if his name defend us, if He send us help, and strengthen us, if He remember our offerings, and accept such poor sacrifice as we at the best can render unto Him, if He be disposed to grant our wishes, and to fulfil our mind; then, whatever strength of man or malice of the devil be opposed to us, we shall rejoice in his salvation, we shall have the happiness of knowing that He saves us. Our enemies will be discomfited, and we shall prosper. The Lord will vouchsafe to save us; and our King, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will hear us when we call.

*David teacheth the people to praise in his behalf.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

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| <p>1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!</p> <p>2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.</p> <p>3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.</p> <p>4 He asked life of thee, <i>and</i> thou gavest it him, <i>even</i> length of days for ever and ever.</p> <p>5 His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.</p> <p>6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.</p> <p>7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not</p> | <p>be moved.</p> <p>8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.</p> <p>9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.</p> <p>10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.</p> <p>11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, <i>which</i> they are not able to perform."</p> <p>12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, <i>when</i> thou shalt make ready <i>thine</i> arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.</p> <p>13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: <i>so</i> will we sing and praise thy power.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 852.

##### *Of rejoicing in the salvation of the Lord.*

There appears to be a close connexion between this psalm, and the psalm before it. The former one was fitted for the people to use, in praying for the success of David. The latter one is suitable for the expression of their thanks, on the occasion of his victory. Each is entitled, "A Psalm of David." And we may therefore see in both of them the anxiety of king David, to have an interest in the prayers and praises of his people. We may find in both a motive, an example, and encouragement, to ourselves, to practise the apostolic rule, that we should make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for all men, and especially for kings, and for all who are in authority. See 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. Each is entitled "A Psalm of David." Whilst therefore we expect to find in both a reference to David's warfare and victory, we may expect also to find much that is more justly applicable to Him whom David calls his Lord, see Matt.



22. 43, to Him of whom David was undoubtedly a type, and of whom David's words in each of his inspired psalms, ought probably to be regarded as typical.

As to David's own history, considering that these psalms refer to his war with the children of Ammon, we may observe, that according to his prayer he obtained a complete victory. And it is particularly mentioned in the history, that "he took off their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold, with the precious stones, and it was set on David's head." 2 Sam. 12. 30. We find also, that in regard to length of life, he received this assurance from God by his prophet: "when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." 2 Sam. 7. 12, 13. So that David had to thank God for the gift of an everlasting kingdom to be realized in one of his descendants, and through Him to be realized in David himself. And he had reason to rejoice in his present success, not only for its own sake, but inasmuch as it was an earnest of God's future favour, a proof to him that God would in like manner subdue other and more formidable enemies, his sins, and their power, and those evil spirits who were in league against the safety of his soul.

And now to view these two psalms as referring to our Saviour; we may consider that in the former one the church is taught to profess faith in Christ, in his all prevailing merits, and in their acceptance with God the Father; the church is taught to rejoice in the salvation wrought by Christ; the children of Zion are instructed to be joyful in their king. See Ps. 149. 2. Whilst in the psalm before us, the church expresses devout acknowledgments for God's gracious goodness in the honour put upon fallen human nature, in that the Son of God vouchsafed to be made man, and in that He, being both God and man, has vanquished our most deadly enemies, has triumphed over sin and death, has seen Satan fall like lightning from heaven, see Luke 10. 18, has been crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords, and has promised to every one of us, upon condition of our faithful service, a crown of immortal glory. In these praises and thanksgivings, let us devoutly join. In this thankful and triumphant spirit, let us carry on our appointed warfare with the enemies which here beset us; at once distrustful of our own ability to resist them, glad to see our Lord exalted in his own strength, and resolved, for our own parts, that if there be little else that we can do, still will we sing and praise his power.



*David lamenteth his miserable estate.*

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.

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| <p>1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? <i>why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?</i></p> <p>2 O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.</p> <p>3 But thou <i>art</i> holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.</p> <p>4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.</p> <p>5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.</p> <p>6 But I <i>am</i> a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.</p> <p>7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, <i>saying</i>,</p> <p>8 He trusted on the LORD <i>that</i> he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.</p> <p>9 But thou <i>art</i> he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope <i>when I was</i> upon my mother's breasts.</p> | <p>10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou <i>art</i> my God from my mother's belly.</p> <p>11 Be not far from me; for trouble <i>is</i> near; for <i>there is</i> none to help.</p> <p>12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong <i>bulls</i> of Bashan have beset me round.</p> <p>13 They gaped upon me <i>with</i> their mouths, <i>as</i> a ravening and a roaring lion.</p> <p>14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.</p> <p>15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.</p> <p>16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.</p> <p>17 I may tell all my bones: they look <i>and</i> stare upon me.</p> <p>18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.</p> |
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## LECTURE 853.

*The marvellous humiliation of our Saviour.*

The first words of this psalm are those which Jesus uttered aloud, when dying for us on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27. 46. The last words of this first portion of the psalm were fulfilled, as both St. Matthew and St. John remark, by the parting of our Lord's garments among the Roman soldiers, and the casting lots upon his vesture. See Matt. 27. 35; John 19. 24. We know not to what heavy affliction of David's these words were originally applied. They may probably have been written, when he was driven from the throne by the rebellion of his son. For then doubtless he cried to God *day and night*. Then he was made the scorn of men. Then he

was reproached by his enemies with the grievous sins that he had committed. Then his goods, even to his very clothes, were divided as a spoil, amongst those who triumphed over him. No wonder that he feared lest God had forsaken him; seeing that he had been taught to look on temporal calamity as the proof of God's displeasure; seeing that he could not then know, as clearly as we do, that when our sin has drawn down on us the chastisements of the Lord, He often brings it to pass, that grievous as they are for the moment, they redound to our endless joy.

But David could not be altogether a stranger to this consolatory doctrine. Only at some times he might be more depressed by his adversity than at others. At some seasons he might find himself less supported than usual by the comfort of God's presence and God's help. This was part of his trial. This is part of the trial of God's most faithful servants. This was part of the trial of Him, whom it behoved to be made in all things like unto his brethren, and who was in all points tempted like as we are, and yet was without sin. See Heb. 2. 17; 4. 15. It was only as being man that Christ could be tempted at all. It was only as being man that Christ could apply to Himself any of the words spoken by David in this psalm. It is only whilst we view Him in his human nature; the divine attributes and glory veiled for a moment, in a manner which we cannot comprehend; it is only whilst we thus regard our blessed Lord as that which He used to call Himself, the Son of man, that we can apply to Him, and even then with the deepest reverence and awe, the whole of this affecting passage.

And, blessed Lord, what an humbling of Thyself is this! What an afflicting of thy soul with the burden of our sins! What a mystery of inconceivable humiliation, that Thou, the only begotten Son of God, shouldst cry aloud as one forsaken of Him! That Thou shouldst pray to have that cup pass away from Thee, and yet it passed not away; and that, when God is wont to grant the prayers of others! that Thou shouldst be despised, almost as if less than man, when Thou wert all the while not less than God! that Thou shouldst be taunted with thy trust in the Most High, and compassed about with men of temper like that of savage beasts! that thy life should be taken by a most painful death, thy hands and feet pierced, thy sacred person nailed to the cross! What inconceivable humiliation is this! What mystery inexplicable, adorable! Oh never, whilst we contemplate thy human sufferings, never may we forget that which gave them their inestimable worth, thy divine nature! Oh never whilst we think of that which Thou didst bear for us as the Son of man, never may we fail to say with the centurion, and them that were with him, watching Thee, "Truly this was the Son of God!" Matt. 27. 54.

*David praiseth God, in the name of the Messiah.*

- 19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.
- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
- 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.
- 25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that
- fear him.
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- 28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD's: and he *is* the governor among the nations.
- 29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and none can keep alive his own soul.
- 30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation.
- 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

## LECTURE 854.

*Of rejoicing in the propagation of Christ's Gospel.*

When our spirits are depressed, and our souls are apprehensive lest God have forsaken us, it should be some comfort to us to know, that not only God's most faithful servants, as David amongst others, have gone through this trial, but that it also was experienced by our Lord Himself. See Matt. 27. 46. And further it may console us to reflect, that this painful apprehension was soon turned into joy, both on the part of David, and on the part of Him whom David was a type of. In the midst of our Lord's very earnest prayer, in his agony at Gethsemane, we are informed by St. Luke, that "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Luke 22. 43. And we may view the words before us as the expression of the strength, which He who was made perfect through sufferings, derived at this painful hour from the great Source of power, peace, and joy.

We know indeed from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that these words may be interpreted as if spoken by our Saviour. For when it is there argued, that "both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one," it is added, "for which cause he



is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare my name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Heb. 2. 11, 12. And perhaps we may do right in considering, that the praise here intended is that which is expressed in the words straightway following in this psalm: "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him he heard." Such is the praise, prophetically offered up in the name of Christ, by his servant David in the Old Testament. And agreeable thereto is this testimony of the New Testament; namely, that our Lord, "in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Heb. 5. 7. Oh, if we in any thing have prayed, and have offered up our prayers like Christ with reverence, and have been heard therein, let us with David, and much more with Christ, praise Him who has vouchsafed to hear us!

But let us observe what were the sources of our Saviour's joy, as well as the topics of his praise. They were these; the deliverance wrought by God, and the numbers both of Jews and Gentiles, both of rich and poor, both of them that were nigh and of them that were afar off, who would be saved through Him, who would become by his means worshippers of God in spirit and in truth. To eat of a sacrifice was an act of communion, an expression of faith and devotion towards Him to whom the sacrifice had been offered. When therefore we read, "the meek shall eat and be satisfied," and again, "All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship," we understand hereby, that multitudes of all ranks and dispositions should worship God through Christ. And we consider that this was the joy set before Him, for the sake of which He "endured the cross, despising the shame." Heb. 12. 2. Let us endeavour to take a deep interest in that which ministered so much rejoicing to our suffering Saviour. Let us do what we can towards promoting the growth of Christianity amongst those who have forgotten God. Let us rejoice in all the success which attends on this good work. Yea, Lord, let it be, we pray Thee, a matter of most heartfelt joy with us, when any progress is made towards this object of our hopes, this ground of thy rejoicing, that "all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."

*David praiseth the Lord as his Shepherd.*

A Psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my shepherd; thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

## LECTURE 855.

*That Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of his people.*

It has been thought, and with some reason, that this psalm was written by David when under the persecution of his enemies; either when he was secreting himself from the pursuit of Saul, or when he was withdrawing from the violence of Absalom. Beautiful as is the description of peace and plenty here set before us, it derives fresh interest when regarded in this point of view; when we observe that David speaks of God's restoring his soul, as if from a state of adversity, and when we note that the plenty for which he gives thanks to God was prepared for him in the presence of his enemies. These are the expressions which make it probable, that the psalm was written under the pressure of adversity. And the new force and beauty hence derived consists in this, that it was in the midst of outward trouble that God gave David inward ease, and in the midst of persecution from enemies, peace and plenty.

And this view of the occasion on which the psalm was written, makes it so much the more applicable to the case of Christians in general whilst yet on earth. We are here beset with difficulties. We do not yet reign with Christ, but rather we contend with Satan. We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but also with the rulers of the darkness of this world. See Eph. 6. 12. We have many a gloomy valley to pass through, many passages of fearful temptation, much agony of body or of mind, or both, to undergo. And there may be times when the afflicted soul almost thinks itself forsaken of God; the most terrible of all the troubles which can be conceived to befall it. But it was the same David who one while thus trembled for his safety, and who soon afterwards is heard to say with thankfulness, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." It was the same David, and in the same or in the like distress. It was not when he was seated on his throne, in the state of a victorious monarch, but it was when he



was in exile in the wilderness, that he was enabled thus to testify of God, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." It was whilst his life as well as his crown was in jeopardy, and when perhaps he was haunted by the bitter reflection that all this was the just chastisement of his grievous sin, then it was that this assurance was brought to his mind: "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." No passage so dark, not though meet to be called "the valley of the shadow of death," but that with God to help him, he need fear no evil. No enemies so numerous, or so active, but that with God to feed him, his table was replenished with all things pertaining to an abundant feast. No discomfiture so great, no condition so low, but that he could receive it as a token of God's love, and that with God to restore him, he could feel assured, that goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life, and he should worship again without hinderance, and without ceasing, in the house of the Lord, now seemingly barred up against him.

The Scriptures often speak of God under the character of a shepherd. And this figure of speech was very suitable in the mouth of David, who had himself been used to feed his father's flock. This straightway leads our thoughts to Him, who said to his disciples, "I am the good shepherd;" John 10. 11; and of whom it is testified, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that He is "that great Shepherd of the sheep." Heb. 13. 20. He it is who now feeds his Father's flock. And as God said to his people of old by the prophet, "Ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God;" Ezek. 34. 31; so does his blessed Son now say to us, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12. 32. Whatever then here threatens us, we "will fear no evil." With Jesus for our Shepherd, we may be sure that we shall not want. With his rod and staff to comfort us, we may trust that our souls will prosper, alike "in the green pastures," "beside the still waters," or in "the valley of the shadow of death," alike in prosperity and in adversity, alike in time of quiet and in time of trouble, alike when we seem most at peace with God, and when He most seems to be hiding from us the light of his countenance. Yes, even then is the good Shepherd preparing, for them that love Him, a feast of good things, which He will give them richly to enjoy in the presence of their enemies. His mercy and goodness will follow them through this life to the next; where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." For there He is at once the good Shepherd, and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and there "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7. 16, 17.



*David sheweth who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord.*

*A Psalm of David.*

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| <p>1 The earth <i>is</i> the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.</p> <p>2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.</p> <p>3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?</p> <p>4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.</p> <p>5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.</p> | <p>6 This <i>is</i> the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.</p> <p>7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.</p> <p>8 Who <i>is</i> this King of glory? the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.</p> <p>9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift <i>them</i> up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.</p> <p>10 Who <i>is</i> this King of glory? the LORD of hosts, he <i>is</i> the King of glory. Selah.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 856.

*Our hope of ascending into heaven with Christ.*

It appears highly probable that this psalm was prepared for the solemn occasion, when the ark was removed by David from the house of Obed-Edom, and fixed in the tabernacle on mount Zion. And it is appropriately selected by our church, to be used on the day of our Lord's ascension into heaven; by which event we may be reminded, that "when this earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1. If "the earth is the Lord's," so are the heavens also; and so is that glorious place, as we for want of better language call it, that glorious place and state of being, in which God dwells, and has dwelt, and will dwell, for ever and ever. Heaven, of which all the brightness of the heavens over our heads is but a faint image, heaven, and they that dwell therein, and all the fulness of joy which is there for evermore, all "is the Lord's." For all things that are have been established by Him, all made and created out of nothing; all excellently ordered according to his wisdom, for the setting forth of his own great glory. And why has He created things so manifold, and ordered them so variously, one beneath another, in degrees of eminence and excellence? Is it not that thus every thing around us may prompt us to aspire to progressive heights of holiness and happiness? Is it not that thus every soul which God has made may be urged to go on continually to perfection; and even as all the stars in the firmament are thought to be moving swiftly in one uniform direction, so may men and angels be constantly approaching towards the perfect glory of the Godhead, and yet always fall infinitely short of it? In this progress, if such be indeed the ever increasing joy which is set before

us, in this progress there is at least one great and most important change, as to which we are informed with certainty; our ascension from earth to heaven. And not to dwell on things that are too high for us, let us delight rather to profit by the things which are clearly revealed. Let us study in the passage of the word of God before us, the character of those who are fit to worship Him in his temples upon earth, and who are being fitted to magnify his holy name with saints and angels in heaven. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" Think we that it is only he who seems here to be most highly favoured? Think we that it is the monarch, the nobleman, the ruler of the people, or the minister of the church? Have the great, and the learned, any precedency with God before the unlearned and the poor? No, let all observe, that the description of a saint of God, as here set down, is confined to matters within the reach of every one. It is "he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob."

But what would avail all our efforts, if unassisted by our Saviour? How could we ascend into the hill of the Lord, unless Christ had gone before? And which of us could stand in his holy place, unless Christ had gone to prepare a place for us? Joyfully and thankfully we apply to Him, and to his ascension into heaven, the sublime language with which this psalm concludes: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." This is not merely David's proclamation, as he carries up the ark into the tabernacle. It is the note of triumph announcing Christ's ascension to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." It is He, who having by means of his cross "spoiled principalities and powers," "made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Col. 2. 15. It is He, who having through death destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," delivered "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2. 14, 15. Again, therefore, let the summons be proclaimed, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." And if it be again demanded, "Who is this King of glory?" we will again thankfully reply, "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." It is "the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. 2. 8, whom the princes of this world crucified. It is the Captain of our salvation, see Heb. 2. 10, in whose celestial train we hope ourselves to enter into heaven. Him must the heavens now admit, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. Him must all creatures join to worship, and crown Him Lord of all.

*David declareth his integrity, but prayeth for pardon.*

A Psalm of David.

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| 1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.  | 11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it <i>is</i> great.                              |
| 2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.   | 12 What man <i>is</i> he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way <i>that</i> he shall choose. |
| 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.                                   | 13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.                                     |
| 4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.   | 14 The secret of the LORD <i>is</i> with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.           |
| 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou <i>art</i> the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.                   | 15 Mine eyes <i>are</i> ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.                   |
| 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they <i>have been</i> ever of old.                            | 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I <i>am</i> desolate and afflicted.                      |
| 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD. | 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.                            |
| 8 Good and upright <i>is</i> the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.  | 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.   |
| 9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.   | 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they <i>hate</i> me with cruel hatred.                    |
| 10 All the paths of the LORD <i>are</i> mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.                         | 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.                      |
|   | 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.  |
|   | 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.  |

### LECTURE 857.

*We must both rely on God's mercy, and obey his will.*

Very frequently in the psalms does David make mention of his enemies. Thus he prays in the psalm before us, "let not mine enemies triumph over me;" and again, "Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with a cruel hatred." Surely they are the enemies of Christ that are here spoken of. Surely we, as well as David, have many and bitter enemies, if we feel as we ought to feel, that they who hate our Lord can be no friends of



ours. Let us, with David, pray to God that we may not be made ashamed, nor dishonour our Saviour's name, in the presence of these his foes. Let us pray to God to shew us his ways, and to lead us in his truth. Let us lift up our souls unto the Lord, and trust in Him as the God of our salvation. This is our way to give no occasion for the enemies of our Lord to triumph in our fall.

But whilst David professes the most devout reliance on the Lord, and declares that he is waiting upon God all the day long, he deeply feels his need of God's mercy, he pleads earnestly for the pardon of his sins past, he casts himself on God's goodness and willingness to teach sinners in the way, he again begs to be forgiven, and that for God's name's sake, he looks to God as his Deliverer, who will pluck his feet out of the net, he pleads his own helpless and afflicted state, and repeats yet once more his prayer for forgiveness. In the midst however of these prayers for pardon, and expressions of dependence on God's mercy, he speaks as one whose conscience testified that he was disposed to learn with meekness, was resolved to keep God's covenant, and was one of those who feared the Lord, and put their trust in Him. And as if to point our attention to the close connexion of these two apparently inconsistent states of mind, he sums up the whole psalm in these two verses at the end. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles."

Now the truth is, that there is no real inconsistency in these expressions. On the contrary, it is the union and combination of the two principles here expressed which form the just consistency of a truly Christian character. We must so believe in God's mercy as to trust that He is willing to forgive sin. And at the same time we must never wilfully commit any sin to be forgiven. We can be saved only by means of God's redeeming us. And yet we cannot be saved without integrity and uprightness, without a sincere and effectual purpose of the heart to obey God to the best of our power. We must come to Him to be taught, convinced that we are sinners. And yet if we are not meek, we must not expect that He will teach us. We must own that our iniquity is great, and pray God to pardon it, not for our own sakes, far from it, but for the sake of our Saviour Christ. And yet unless we fear Him, this is a thing that will be hidden from us, this way of salvation will remain a secret to us, this covenant of mercy through Christ will not be effectually made known to us. Redemption is God's free gift. Salvation is Christ's own work. And yet we are bound to believe and to obey. Otherwise the death of Christ will do us no service, and though we have a Saviour we shall not be saved.

*David stateth several points in his integrity.*

*A Psalm of David.*

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| <p>1 Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.</p> <p>2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.</p> <p>3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.</p> <p>4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.</p> <p>5 I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked.</p> <p>6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine</p> | <p>altar, O LORD:</p> <p>7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.</p> <p>8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.</p> <p>9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:</p> <p>10 In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.</p> <p>11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.</p> <p>12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the Lord.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 858.

*Sundry parts and proofs of serving God sincerely.*

David begins this psalm with appealing to the judgment of the Lord; declaring that he has both walked in his integrity, and also has trusted in the Lord; on the strength of which two things he is persuaded that he shall not fall. Let us then observe the particulars of the integrity in which David walked, as here set down. "Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes." Here is a great point of our duty, an indispensable requisite in our integrity, to set before our eyes, and to keep before our eyes, the marvellous lovingkindness of the Lord. For it is by dwelling on the love of God for us that we are brought to feel due love for Him; according to the words of the beloved disciple, "We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4. 19. "And I have walked in thy truth." David had never been tempted to worship false gods, or to bow down before images. He had stedfastly adhered to the doctrine of the One living and true God, as plainly revealed in the Law, and to the hope of the one Mediator between God and man, as both set forth in several ancient prophecies, and abundantly foreshadowed in the rites and sacrifices which God had ordained by Moses. Next there is mentioned a class of duties, which is usually found to furnish a correct test as to whether we are in earnest with God or not. "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked." The choice of our society, as far as the choice lies with ourselves, shews plainly which way our hearts incline. As to our near re-

latives, and those who have been our friends from infancy, it does not depend upon us whether these be lovers of God or doers of evil. But it must be our own fault if we have made friends for ourselves of those who are enemies of the Lord. And it must be our stedfast purpose, if we would be counted by Him for friends of his, to avoid the company of the notoriously wicked, and of those who are indifferent to religion, and of those, who whilst they assume the form of godliness, obviously deny the power thereof. It must be our endeavour to prove that we are Israelites indeed, by the exercise of a sound discretion, united with a true zeal for God and godliness, in the choice of those with whom we chiefly live.

Next David makes mention of his attendance on religious ordinances, and of the spirit in which he purposed to attend on them: "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord: that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." Another very important class of duties this; another very sure test of integrity; to love God's house, to delight in worshipping Him there, to tell of his great goodness in the congregation of his people, to publish it thankfully with the lips, as well as to feel thankfulness for it in the heart, and to wash the hands in innocency before compassing God's altar, to prepare ourselves for joining in divine service, not by the cleansing of the body but by the purifying of the heart. Oh what a searching test of our integrity is here suggested to us, what a proof of whether we do sincerely love and serve our Lord! Oh how different is the kind of worship here described, from that cold formal service of the lips, which many must know that they are content to offer unto God in the place where his "honour dwelleth!"

Lastly, David dreaded and deprecated the end of the ungodly. He prayed God not to gather his soul with them. He would neither live with them, nor die with them. It was a part of his integrity to fear God, and to be alive to the terrors of the Lord. And as long as he thus walked, whilst he felt not the less need to be redeemed by God, he trusted that God would redeem him; he was persuaded that he was standing on sure ground; and for this as well as for all other blessings he resolved to praise God in the congregations. Thankfulness is the crown of all other graces. That we may praise God for his blessings, this alone would be a good reason why we should pray for them. Praised then be God for redeeming us! Praised be God for calling us to holiness, for requiring of us most strict integrity of heart and life! God grant that we may sincerely purpose to do and to be all that He requires! And whereinsoever by his grace we succeed in fulfilling his most blessed will, God be praised for our success; through Jesus Christ our Lord!



*David declareth his confidence in God.**A Psalm of David.*

1 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will* I be confident.

4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

9 Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

## LECTURE 859.

*That we ought to wait on God with a good courage.*

This psalm has been thought to refer to the imminent danger from which Abishai delivered king David in a battle with the Philistines; on which occasion "the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel." 2 Sam. 21. 17. To which words we may conceive that David is alluding when he says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Neither the number, the strength, nor the fury of our enemies need alarm us; provided God be with us. Provided we have

ground to think that we have Him to guide and guard us, we are privileged, in the midst of dangers the most imminent, to enjoy the most perfect peace.

The great desire of the psalmist was to "dwell in the house of the Lord" all the days of his life, "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." He felt that this would ensure his safe keeping. And then his safety would prompt him to offer fresh praise for his deliverance, fresh sacrifices of joy in the Lord's tabernacle. Though we cannot be always occupied in religious ordinances, we may be always doing religious duties, always living in the sense of God's presence, always acting with a view to please Him. And they who so live are as constantly enjoying God's presence and beholding God's glory, as if they were worshipping without ceasing in his temple. This is the right view to take of all that we have to do in this life. Nothing, however trifling in itself, is to be considered vanity, if it be at the time our duty to do it. Our ordinary employments, if they be those which appertain to that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us, may be pursued in a frame of mind which will make them all a kind of worshipping of God, and render every place a kind of temple to his honour.

"Seek ye my face." Is it thus that God exhorts us? The heart which is disposed aright will straightway answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Straightway will the voice of prayer be heard, beseeching God not to hide his face. Straightway will follow the words of firm assurance, that though our nearest relatives should forsake us, the Lord would take us up. David, in the times of his distress, though not forsaken by his parents, had been forced to part with them for their greater safety. See 1 Sam. 22. 3. It happens to most men, that father and mother are taken from them by the hand of death. Nothing can more forcibly remind them of their own mortality than the act of committing to the grave the bodies out of which their own were moulded. Nothing is better fitted to convince them that here they have no abiding place. But they have elsewhere. They have a Father in heaven, of whom nothing can deprive them, and a home prepared for them with Him which will endure for ever. Let them wait for this, with a good courage. Whatsoever dangers beset them in their way, let them wait on the Lord for his protection and his help. He will strengthen their hearts. He will deliver their souls. He will make them, if they believe in Him, partakers of his goodness, in the land where they die no more.

*David prayeth, and blesseth God for hearing him.*

*A Psalm of David.*

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| <p>1 Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.</p> <p>2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.</p> <p>3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.</p> <p>4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.</p> | <p>5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.</p> <p>6 Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.</p> <p>7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.</p> <p>8 The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.</p> <p>9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.</p> |
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### LECTURE 860.

*Of praying God to speak peace unto our souls.*

How many are content with saying their prayers, as they call it, and never wait to consider whether God hears them, never care to ascertain that God grants them! How instructive to such persons is the anxiety here expressed by David that God would respond to his petitions: "be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit!" Here is implied something more than our crying unto God, something more than his hearing our voice, when we lift up our hands and voice and heart in prayer. It is implied that God answers our petitions, and makes us sensible that He does so. And though we may not expect always to receive this welcome token of his presence and lovingkindness, this sense as of the voice of the most High assuring us that our prayer is heard, still we may always ask for it in prayer, saying, "be not silent unto me;" and we may be satisfied in regard to this, as in regard to every other blessing for which we ask faithfully in our Saviour's name, that God will give it, if it be good for us to have it.

We may join also in David's petition not to be drawn away "with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace with their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts." We may do well to pray that God's grace may keep us far from



such practices, far from the fellowship of them which do such things. And though it would ill become us to judge or to condemn our brethren, it would be vain to pray without endeavouring to practise; and therefore where wickedness is notorious, there we must stedfastly refuse to enter into the bands of friendship and society. The sentence of God, let us remember, is gone forth against all such evil doers. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up." It will be hereafter our duty, our glory, and our joy, if we shall be saved ourselves, to join in praising the righteous judgments of the Judge, who will not fail to condemn the ungodly. David, speaking by inspiration, was led even to pray to God that He would fulfil his oft repeated threats, of rewarding such sinners according to their works. And we, whilst we feel it more fit for such as we are, to pray God to convert their hearts, must by all means take care, that as long as they remain evidently unconverted, we give them no countenance, and afford them no encouragement, and especially say nothing and do nothing which might lead them to think, that the wicked can escape unpunished.

It would seem as if, in the midst of his supplications, David's first petition had been heard, and the Lord had not been silent, but had spoken peace and acceptance to his soul; and that this is the way to account for his sudden ejaculation, "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications." Indeed David almost says as much in the words which follow: "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped." No wonder that hereupon he should declare that his heart greatly rejoiced. No wonder that straightway he should resolve, that in his song he would praise God. No wonder that straightway he did as he resolved, and concluded with praising God for his goodness, and praying to Him for the continuance of his blessings. In David, then, whilst uttering this psalm, we are reminded of the prophetic words: "it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Is. 65. 24. Much more let us hope, that these words, written long after David's time, will be fulfilled in us. Let us pray, believing that God will hear immediately. Let us pray with lively faith in his willingness to answer even before we call. And if, in the midst of our devotions, we have the witness of the Spirit testifying that our prayer is heard, let us not rise from before the throne of grace until we have added praise to prayer, and said, "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications."

*David calleth on the great to glorify God.*

A Psalm of David.

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| <p>1 Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.</p> <p>2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.</p> <p>3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.</p> <p>4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.</p> <p>5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.</p> <p>6 He maketh them also to skip</p> | <p>like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.</p> <p>7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.</p> <p>8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.</p> <p>9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.</p> <p>10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.</p> <p>11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.</p> |
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## LECTURE 861.

*God's great power demands our lowly reverence.*

At the commencement of this psalm David calls on the mighty, or the great men of the earth, to give unto the Lord glory and strength; or, in other words, to ascribe all their strength and glory unto God, and to glorify Him for all his gracious gifts. A most needful exhortation, considering how many are the temptations of the great, and especially how strongly they are often tempted to pride themselves in earthly greatness. Let all such, then, learn the lesson of humility, by considering how weak, and poor, and mean they are, as compared with Almighty God. Let them, as David bids them, "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;" acknowledging themselves to be no less accountable to Him than the very least of their dependants. Let them "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;" studying indeed to conduct his worship with all things fitly furnished, according to their state, as honouring God with their substance, but still remembering that no grandeur of the outward building, no solemnity of the outward ministration, can make up for the lack of that which is the appointed ornament of divine worship, "the beauty of holiness."

The argument here set before the mighty, to move them thus to honour God, is the great power manifested by Him in his works, and more especially in those movements of the elements,

which seem to us at first sight as at strife amongst themselves, but which are all ordered and purposely arranged by God for good. The waters of the ocean, what an enormous force, what an awful majesty of wrath do they present to our senses, when stirred up by the fury of a storm! How bold, but how suitable and expressive, is the figure of speech, which describes that terrific roar of many waters, and that solemn peal of mighty thunder, as "the voice of the Lord!" What must be the power of his arm, to pursue the same figurative way of speech, what must be the power of the arm of Him, whose very voice can rend the cedars of Lebanon, yea, can make even Lebanon itself to tremble like its own terrified wild beasts; causing the lightning to break forth out of the clouds, shaking the wilderness of Kadesh, and piercing the thick coverts of the forests, even to the haunts of the most retired of their inhabitants? What must be the glory of that great Creator, a glory constantly celebrated by his works in the universe his temple, what must be the greatness and majesty of Him to whom the waters of the flood, that drowned the world, were as the seat whereon He might be conceived to rest at ease, the throne of Him who reigns a King for ever?

Certainly these great works of God, which are however very far from being the chief that He has made, these workings of his power in the outward world, are enough to convince the potentates of the earth, that they have as much need as the most lowly of their subjects to glorify the God who made them. The moment we are compared with God, we are all brought to one level as compared with each other. We are all alike unable to face the storms of ocean, or to cope with the thunder and lightnings of the sky. The monarch and the peasant here stand on the same footing. The stoutest heart, and the most timid, must here own to the same utter helplessness before Him, whom high and low, strong and weak, are alike bound to glorify in every thing. Oh that these manifestations of omnipotence may lead many, of whatsoever rank or station, to turn their thoughts to Him, whose voice is also often to be heard in a still small whisper in their consciences! Oh that there may be a work of power going on within them, answerable to that which goes on around them; every mountain and hill being made low; see Isai. 40. 4; every high thing which would exalt itself against the knowledge of Christ being cast down; see 2 Cor. 10. 5; and the Lord Jesus reigning in their hearts, and overruling all the tempest of their souls for peace and joy in the end! Thus would God give strength unto his people, making the weak mighty in spirit, and making the mighty strong in the Lord. Thus would He give his people the blessing of peace; imparting to their souls that sense of his presence, that confidence in his strength and goodness, which will yield quietness and assurance for ever.



*David praiseth God for the brief endurance of his anger.*

A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David.

- 1 I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.
- 3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
- 4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.
- 5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.
- 6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.
- 7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.
- 8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.
- 9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?
- 10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.
- 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;
- 12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

## LECTURE 862.

*The end of our redemption is that we glorify God.*

This psalm, according to the title, was written by David upon the dedication of his house; at the taking possession of his royal palace, which it appears that he thereupon dedicated to God. It would be well for Christians, when they take possession of a house, to make some such solemn resolutions as these: In this house I resolve to serve God; in this house, God being my helper, I will glorify Christ, by living a Christian life, and by doing all that in me lies to persuade all my household to do likewise. It has been also argued, from some expressions in this psalm, that it refers to a severe sickness with which David had been afflicted. Whether this be so or not, we see plainly that he had suffered by a sickness of the soul; of which he mentions this grievous symptom: "in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved." As long as we think thus, as long as we presume to trust in the continuance of prosperity; whatever health of body we enjoy, we labour under a spiritual disease, and we need to apply for healing to that heavenly Physician, who "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8. 17. And we may apply this to the case of prosperity in the soul, and to those who presume to be quite certain, that when their soul once prospers, they shall thenceforth never be moved. Great is the

danger of those who are thus persuaded that they never can by any means fall away. Great is their risk of having their enemies made to triumph over them, by some signal and disgraceful fall. And great is God's mercy towards them, if He bring them to a better mind, by hiding away his face from them for a time, and thus teaching them that it is not so impossible as they presume to say, that He might hide it away for ever.

Such presumption, however, dangerous as it is to the soul's health, argues at least some concern for the soul's salvation; which, misdirected as it may be through ignorance, is infinitely preferable to the state of those who care for none of these things, who neither are troubled when God hides his face, nor gladdened at the thought of his regarding them with favour. It is to such as these that this psalm of David is most profitable, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness. Let them hear how devoutly he resolves to extol the Lord for deliverance; and let them be no longer careless whether they perish or not. Let them observe how he says, that when he cried to the Lord, the Lord healed him; and let them cry earnestly to God, praying morning and evening, night and day, beseeching Him that He would make them sensible of the necessity of caring for the soul. Let them note how David thanks God, both for bringing him to life when nearly dead, and also for keeping him alive; and let them learn that they need grace in both instances; that only by the mighty power of God can they be made alive from the dead, quickened from carnal security, and that if once they should be quickened, only by the same mighty power can they be preserved from falling back unto perdition.

And finally let all take notice of the end, for which David states that he conceived he had been brought, as it were, to life, healed, helped, and had his mourning turned into joy, his sackcloth exchanged for gladness. It was "to the end," he says, "that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever." And to the same effect he had before called upon God's saints, to sing unto Him and give thanks; for this reason, that "his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Is not this somewhat like to that which was revealed afterwards by St. John, namely, that "God is love?" 1 John 4. 8. And is it not strange that we can know this so clearly, having had it revealed to us so expressly; and yet can be content with mentioning it so seldom, and being usually so altogether silent in respect to singing the praises of the Lord? Oh let us henceforth try to speak more freely to each other of the things which belong unto our peace. And let us also sing praises more frequently to God. Let us so live, and so speak as to glorify our Saviour in all we do and say. Let all our life be thankfulness; and all our language praise!

*David rejoiceth in a special deliverance at God's hand.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

- 1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.
- 2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.
- 3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
- 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou *art* my strength.
- 5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
- 6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.
- 7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;
- 8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my foot in a large room.
- 9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly.
- 10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.
- 11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.
- 12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.
- 13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.
- 14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God.
- 15 My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.
- 16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.
- 17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.
- 18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.
- 19 *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!
- 20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.
- 21 Blessed *be* the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.
- 22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.
- 23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
- 24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.



## LECTURE 863.

*The application of this psalm to our blessed Lord.*

There are some expressions in this psalm, which look as if it referred to the deliverance of David out of the hands of Saul, when the men of Keilah were inclined to betray him. See 1 Sam. 23. 7—13. And certainly on that occasion the Lord shewed him “marvellous kindness in a strong city.” But there is one expression here, which our blessed Lord has applied to Himself, or which at least He vouchsafed to utter, on an occasion of such sacred interest, that it may incline us to apply our reflections on this psalm to Him, and to Him alone. We read in St. Luke’s Gospel that “when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” Luke 23. 46. These then were the last words of Christ upon the cross: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” A striking proof, that Christ was truly man, as well as truly God. And it is by reason of his being man, that we may apply to Him such words as these of David in this psalm, and may conceive of Him as trusting in God, praying to God, and rejoicing in the mercy of God. It is by reason of his having taken our sins upon Himself, and having suffered as a man under the fearful burden of the sins of all men, that we may in any sense consider Him to have pleaded for mercy in such language as the following: “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble;” and again, “my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.” Inexplicable mystery of redeeming love, that He who knew no sin has been made sin for us; see 2 Cor. 5. 21; that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquities of us all, and that by his stripes we are healed! See Isa. 53. 5. If by reason of his having vouchsafed thus to humble Himself, and to be numbered with the transgressors, we may with all devout reverence apply to Him David’s words of humiliation, let us also hear Him addressing to our souls David’s language of urgent exhortation, “O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.” Yes, gracious Saviour, let us thankfully reply, as Thou hast called us to be saints, it shall be our study to be holy; as Thou hast shewn us how God first loved us, it shall be our delight to love Him! Knowing both the goodness and the severity of the Lord, we pray Him to give us courage, strength, and hope! And we trust that He will grant us our petitions, and enable us to do that which Thou hast commanded us, for the sake of Thee, our Lord and Saviour!

*David describeth the blessedness of a sinner forgiven.**A Psalm of David, Maschil.*

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.
- 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.
- 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
- 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
- 6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.
- 7 Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.
- 8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.
- 9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.
- 10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.
- 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

## LECTURE 864.

*Instruction in the way of holiness for them that are forgiven.*

St. Paul writing to the Romans, and arguing that we are justified by faith without the works of the law, brings forward the first two verses of this psalm, in proof of this Gospel doctrine. "Even as David also," he says, "describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. 4. 6—8. This helps to explain St. Paul's own meaning, as St. Paul helps to explain the meaning of the psalmist. Or rather the two passages, by being compared together, enable us the better to understand the meaning of the Holy Spirit in each of them; which is this: that considering man's frailty, man's sinfulness, his blessedness cannot consist in never sinning, but in being regarded by God as if he never had sinned, in being cleared of all imputation of sin, through the abundant mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

This doctrine of God's willingness to blot out our sins, and to regard us as if we had never sinned, is here connected by the psalmist, as it also is connected in the Gospel, with the necessity

of repentance and confession. "When I kept silence," says David, that is to say, as long as I did not confess my sin, "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long;" I was in great pain, both day and night, in anguish both of body and of mind. "But if we confess our sins," as St. John expresses it, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." 1 John 1. 9. And such is also the testimony of David: "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Observe, however, that the confession here intended is something more than saying, We have sinned. It implies genuine repentance. It is the admitting that we have much to repent of, and the professing that we do repent of it. And observe further, that the man, who is here described as blessed, is one "in whose spirit there is no guile." There must be no pretence of faith without really believing, no profession of repentance without really repenting. There must be no secret reserve of sin, unconfessed, unrepented of. There must be no secret intention to abuse the doctrine of God's free pardon, as a ground for continuing in sin.

The psalmist not only warns us against harbouring any guile in our spirit, he also points out to us the course which we must adopt, when convinced of God's mercy in forgiving us, if we would be Israelites indeed in whom is no guile. We must pray; this is one of the first duties consequent upon believing the gracious assurance, that our sins have been forgiven. We must watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. And the more reason we have to think we stand, so much the more must we take heed, and take pains, lest we fall. By prayer, we must put ourselves under God's protection, resort to Him as our shelter in the floods of temptation, trust to Him as the great preserver of our souls, who alone can compass us about "with songs of deliverance." And further, we must resort to God's word, for instruction as to the way in which we ought to walk, and to please Him. We must beware of wilfully walking in our own ways. We must not imagine, that because Christ has made us free from sin, therefore we are at liberty to follow the devices of our own hearts. It is still as true as ever, that "many sorrows shall be to the wicked." And if after tasting that the Lord is gracious, we fall away into wilful wickedness, our sorrows will be all the greater for the grace we have received. Lastly, we must "be glad in the Lord," and also "shout for joy." The blessedness of having had our sins forgiven must fill our hearts with joyfulness, and our lips with praise. The true Christian, however much he mourns for sin, must never cease to rejoice in the Lord. And true Christian joy, however deeply its source may be secreted in the recesses of the heart, must not fail to shew itself in the flow of cheerfulness and thankfulness, which pervades the whole life and conversation.



*An exhortation to praise the Lord for many reasons.*

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright.

2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast.

10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

17 An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.

18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.

21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

## LECTURE 865.

*Of singing to the praise and glory of God.*

The righteous are here exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, and to praise Him both with singing and with instruments of music. The reasons stated as urging them to do so are various and striking. First, the excellency of his word is mentioned, next the excellency of his works. In his word his love of righteousness is specified, in his works the goodness with which the earth is filled. His having made the heavens and all the host of them, by the mere utterance of his will, is next insisted on, then his having made the sea, and his having established the dry land for

the habitation of man, which ought to make "all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." Other grounds of praising God, here set before us, are his bringing to nought the counsel of the heathen, and his making his own counsel prevail for ever; his favour which He manifests to his chosen people, and his providence which He extends to all mankind; his skill in making all men, however infinitely diversified, yet exactly like in kind, and his knowledge in considering, noting, and recording, all the works of all. And lastly a comparison is drawn, between the vanity of those worldly means of safety, in which many are inclined to put their trust, and the security which is attained by fearing the Lord, and hoping in his mercy, and thus having his eye upon us, to save, and help, and deliver us.

Now all these grounds of praise remain as strong at present as they were of old, and urge us as powerfully, as they urged those who lived before us, to rejoice in God, and to celebrate his praise. Let us then resolve, after the example here set forth, that our soul shall wait for the Lord, and that we will look to Him to be our help and shield. Let us trust in Him, and rejoice because we do so. Let us pray to Him, and rejoice for this, that we have grace to pray, and have hope that our prayers are heard. And let us according to our ability shew forth our gladness and thankfulness of heart by singing words of praise to strains of solemn music. This is an art not confined to any age, or rank, or sex, or station. This is one of the many things, in which God has marvellously fashioned the hearts of all generations of mankind alike, a taste for melody of sound, a pleasure in hearing it, a power of producing it with the voice, and with instruments of music, and a sense of its fitness, especially when combined with corresponding words, to express the devout affections of the soul towards Him who made us what we are. Let us then all do our best, not only to praise God, but also to sing his praises. Whatever skill we have in song, either by nature or by art, let us devote it to celebrating the power, and wisdom, and goodness, of the Lord, by singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, in private by ourselves sometimes if we can, or at our family worship if we may, or at all events at our public worship in the congregation of the church.

*David praiseth God for his deliverance from Achish.*

*A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech ; who drove him away, and he departed.*

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| <p>1 I will bless the LORD at all times : his praise <i>shall</i> continually <i>be</i> in my mouth.</p> <p>2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD : the humble shall hear <i>thereof</i>, and be glad.</p> <p>3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.</p> <p>4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.</p> <p>5 They looked unto him, and were lightened : and their faces were not ashamed.</p> <p>6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard <i>him</i>, and saved him out of all his troubles.</p> <p>7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.</p> <p>8 O taste and see that the LORD <i>is</i> good : blessed <i>is</i> the man <i>that</i> trusteth in him.</p> <p>9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints : for <i>there is</i> no want to them that fear him.</p> <p>10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger : but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good <i>thing</i>.</p> <p>11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the LORD.</p> | <p>12 What man <i>is he that</i> desireth life, and loveth <i>many</i> days, that he may see good ?</p> <p>13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.</p> <p>14 Depart from evil, and do good ; seek peace, and pursue it.</p> <p>15 The eyes of the LORD <i>are</i> upon the righteous, and his ears <i>are open</i> unto their cry.</p> <p>16 The face of the LORD <i>is</i> against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.</p> <p>17 The <i>righteous</i> cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.</p> <p>18 The LORD <i>is</i> high unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.</p> <p>19 Many <i>are</i> the afflictions of the righteous : but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.</p> <p>20 He keepeth all his bones : not one of them is broken.</p> <p>21 Evil shall slay the wicked : and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.</p> <p>22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants : and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.</p> |
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## LECTURE 866.

*Of recommending the graces in which we have been deficient.*

In the First Book of Samuel we read of David's feigning himself mad, in order to escape from Achish king of Gath, who in the title of this psalm is called Abimelech. See 1 Sam. 21. 13. This is his song of thankfulness on escaping safely. And in it we may observe, that when he points out to others the way to secure a long and happy life, he especially mentions this one



point of duty, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile;" as if on purpose to reflect upon himself, for the deceit which he had been led to practise. His counsel has been repeated in the New Testament, in nearly the same words: "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." 1 Pet. 3. 10—12. And it is remarkable that St. Peter, who quotes this high commendation of sincerity, should himself also have been tempted by an unworthy fear, to say that which was most opposite to the truth. Let us praise God for the testimony of these his servants, frail though they were, yet faithful in the main, eminent for faithfulness and truth, and eminently honoured by God's great mercy, as inspired teachers of those very duties, in which they had unhappily transgressed.

And must not this be more or less the case, not only with every faithful preacher of the Gospel, but with every one who faithfully professes it, and heartily endeavours to recommend it? What grace of godliness can we now desire to shew forth, in which we are not conscious that in time past we have been ourselves greatly wanting? What evil propensity of the corrupted heart can we now labour to make others loathe, to which we must not confess that we were by nature ourselves addicted, and in which we have not ourselves indulged either in thought, word, or deed? And which of us, reflecting on his own wickedness and helplessness, except so far as he has been strengthened and sanctified by God, may not justly describe his case in the same words which David used for his: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles?" Oh let us then all with David magnify the Lord, "and let us exalt his name together." In danger let us trust to his defending us, in want to his supplying us. And then, though our afflictions be many, God will deliver us out of all. And in the redeeming and saving of our souls, He will fulfil in us that promise or assurance, which was literally accomplished in the mortal body of our divine Saviour, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken." See John 19. 36.

*David desireth the help of God against his enemies.**A Psalm of David.*

- 1 Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.
- 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.
- 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, *I am thy salvation.*
- 4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.
- 5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them.*
- 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.
- 7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in a pit*, which without cause they have digged for my soul.
- 8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.
- 9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.
- 10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?
- 11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.
- 12 They rewarded me evil for good *to the spoiling of my soul.*
- 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing ~~was~~ sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.
- 14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or brother*: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his mother.*

## LECTURE 867.

*The excellency of inspired Scripture.*

We have been taught, in one of David's former psalms, to consider the wicked as the sword of God, which He is sometimes pleased to use for the chastisement of the faithful. See Ps. 17. 13. It is no less true, that in the dispensation of the Old Testament God was often pleased to use the faithful, as his sword, for the punishment and rooting out of the wicked. Thus there was enmity between the one party and the other. And if it was in some cases the duty of those who worshipped Jehovah, to slay those who bowed down unto false gods, it would be their duty also to pray for success in any conflict which they might have with these idolaters. It was not a personal enmity, but an abhorrence of evil principles and of evil things, to be proved, according to God's will, in some cases, by the manifestation of zeal against evil persons. It was a zeal for God inclining men to regard his

enemies as their own; even as David also in another psalm, when praying God to destroy his enemies, gives this reason, "for they have rebelled against thee." Ps. 5. 10.

It may be indeed, that all the passages in the psalms, translated in our Bible as imprecations or prayers against enemies, ought rather to be translated as prophecies. And so many devout interpreters direct us to translate them. As for instance, instead of reading in this psalm, "let them be confounded, and put to shame that seek after my soul," it is proposed to read, "they shall be confounded," and again, "they shall be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt." Now though this may possibly be the right way of translating these expressions, we cannot think it likely that it is so. For they are not so translated in a version of the Bible from Hebrew into Greek, a version from the tongue in which the Old Testament is written into that in which the New Testament is written, a version made above two hundred years before the time of our blessed Lord's manifestation in the flesh. And those who made this most ancient of all versions of the Bible, were not likely to be mistaken on a point like this. Neither is it probable that our own translators would have erred so greatly and so frequently, in their judgment on a point of such considerable importance.

We may learn from the course which they adopted in this and many other instances, that in translating or interpreting the word of God, we ought to aim simply at this one object, namely, to discover what the mind of the Spirit really is in the passage before us. We ought not to consider for one moment which meaning will best commend itself to those who are desirous to find occasion against the excellency of the word of God. We are sure that whatsoever He has inspired must be excellent, wise, just, and good; and we are concerned only to find out what it really means. Does David use language, which in any other case, would be understood as praying for the destruction of his enemies? If so, no doubt he prays that they may be destroyed. Was David inspired so to pray? If so, no doubt it was right for him to do so. We may or may not be able to shew wherein these imprecations are profitable for our instruction in righteousness. But doubtless they are profitable, if rightly understood. And even if we could not understand them aright, if we could not, as we think we can, reconcile them with other passages of Scripture, about which there can be no mistake, still these would be of use to humble us; and we should still profit by reflecting, as we read them, that whatsoever is written by inspiration of God must be altogether good.



*David continueth to pray against his enemies.*

- 15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: *yea*, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me*, and ceased not:
- 16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.
- 17 LORD, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.
- 18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.
- 19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: *neither* let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.
- 20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.
- 21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, *and* said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *it*.
- 22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O LORD, be not far from me.
- 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
- 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.
- 25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.
- 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify *themselves* against me.
- 27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.
- 28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

## LECTURE 868.

*How we ought to behave towards the enemies of Christ.*

The enemies of David were persons at enmity with God, resolved to oppose God's appointment when he chose David to occupy the throne of Israel; and in most cases they were either actual idolaters, or false worshippers of the true God. As such they may be considered to represent to us those who are now "the enemies of the cross of Christ." And these are thus described by St. Paul writing to the Philippians, "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Phil. 3. 18, 19. It was a generation of this character that first rejected Christ, and then crucified Him. They were men of this class, who laid to his charge things of which He was guiltless, and rewarded Him evil for good, and mocked Him, and gnashed on Him with their teeth.

And there are thousands of men now likeminded with these, who having set up their rest in this present world, detest the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer, because whilst some abuse it as an argument for sin, they have the sense to know, that if it be honestly admitted for the truth, it is of the most constraining power to enforce a holy life, and to infuse a heavenly mind.

Now in regard to men like these, who are almost sure to prove their enmity to Christ by hating and hurting faithful Christians, what are the feelings which Christians might learn to cultivate, by proper study of the psalm before us? First, let us observe how David says, that he behaved when his enemies were sick: "I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother." Ver. 14. Let us thus sympathise with the afflictions of the worst of men. Let us give them proof of this our sympathy, in case it may please God thereby to soften their hearts. Let us behave thus towards themselves personally. And yet, at the same time, let us plainly make them aware, that we abhor their principles; let us earnestly pray, that they may be put to confusion in their evil practices. And in whatsoever they practise against us, with a view to dishonour Christ in the persons of his servants, whilst we manifest a readiness to forgive them the wrong done unto ourselves, let us endeavour to shew them the danger they incur in the affront offered to our Saviour. The voice of prayer, let us remember, and if possible remind them, the voice of prayer has been heard of old, as inspired by God, pleading for the shameful discomfiture of those, who rejoice in the hurt of his servants. These prayers have been repeated in all ages of the church, and will be repeated in the words of inspiration as long as there is a church on earth. And in the vision of things heavenly, entitled the Revelation of St. John, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, are heard to cry with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. 6. 10. These things ought to make us tremble for the wicked; and not tremble only, but also labour so much the more for their conversion, in proportion as we feel aware, that unless they are converted, we shall hereafter see these inspired prayers fulfilled in their everlasting destruction.

*David giveth account of the wicked, and praiseth God.*

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, the servant of the LORD.

- 1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.
- 2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
- 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and to do good.* 9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.
- 4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that is not good*; he abhorreth not evil. 10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
- 5 Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; *and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.* 11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.
- 6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. 12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.
- 7 How excellent is thy loving-

## LECTURE 869.

*The case of the wicked contrasted with that of the good.*

The transgression of a wicked man, as meditated on by David, could be accounted for only by this consideration, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes." This appears to be the meaning of the words with which this psalm begins, "the transgression of the wicked saith within my heart." And so we read in our Prayer Book translation of the Psalms, which often throws much light on the version in our Bibles, "My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly; that there is no fear of God before his eyes." "My heart sheweth me," for this is the testimony of the good man's heart, that we cannot wilfully do wrong as long as we think with awe of God's presence, and of his power, and of his hatred against sin. We must first have practised some kind of self deceit, and must have persuaded ourselves out of the fear of God, and must have listened to the suggestions of the tempter, that our sin will not be found out, or will not be punished, before we could be guilty of deliberate falsehood, or leave off doing good, and devote ourselves to doing evil. This is a truth which it is to be hoped our hearts respond to. For how little can we really be believing in the greatness, and goodness, and holiness of God,



unless we feel, that with the sense of his presence and with the dread of his judgments on our minds, it is not possible that we should sin wilfully?

But see how readily the psalmist turns his thoughts from the terrors of the Lord, to his mercifulness and truth! See how largely the contemplation of God's power ministers to our comfort, hope, and joy, when we connect it with the notion of God's love! Then we reflect, that there is no limit to his mercy, and that to his faithfulness also there is no exception; that his promises are no less sure than his threatenings, and that He is no less willing to preserve, than able to destroy. The greatness of his works then serves to remind us of the infinite perfection of his attributes; the lofty mountains shew how exalted is his holiness, the depths of ocean how unsearchable his wisdom. Instead of trembling for ourselves, we are led rather to praise and magnify Him. And the thought of his lovingkindness overpowering all other considerations, we put our trust under the shadow of his wings, we feel abundantly satisfied with the portion which He provides for us, we drink of the rivers of his pleasures, and at the fountain of his divine light we have light and life for ever.

What a contrast is here drawn between the practices of the wicked and the life of the righteous, between the hardened hearts of the ungodly and the devout affections of the faithful! The one having not so much as the fear of God before his eyes, the other animated with trust in God's mercy; the one flattering himself in his own eyes, the other seeing the light of truth at the fountain head of the truth of God; the one working iniquity with all greediness in blind ignorance of danger, till he falls, and is cast down, never to rise more, the other penetrated with a sense of God's goodness, delighting to do God's will, enabled to resist temptation through the continuance of God's lovingkindness, contented in whatsoever state he is, and though he knows not yet what he shall be, so deeply persuaded of God's faithfulness and truth, that he is sure he shall be infinitely happy! What a contrast is here drawn, and how powerfully does it urge us to refuse the evil, and to choose the good! But how entirely do we depend upon God's preventing grace to enable us either to choose, or even to think aright. Do Thou then, Lord, help us to discern the truth, instead of deceiving our own selves. Help us to know Thee the only God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. Help us to perceive the excellency of the knowledge of our Saviour. And when we know Thee as Thou art, by faith in Him, oh continue thy lovingkindness by helping us to serve Thee, as Thou by Him hast taught us!

*David argueth against envying evil doers.**A Psalm of David.*

1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

10 For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall not be*: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall not be*.

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, *and* to slay such as be of upright conversation.

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

16 A little that a righteous man hath *is* better than the riches of many wicked.

17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

## LECTURE 870.

*The miserable end of the ungodly.*

Under the dispensation of the law, the Israelites were led to expect, that Jehovah, who ruled over them as their King, would administer immediate rewards and punishments, according to their good and evil conduct. It is very likely that when the people in the folly of their hearts demanded to have one of their fellow-

creatures for their king, and when God indulged them in this vain request, He began to deprive them by degrees of the benefit of this special providence. And hence would arise great perplexity, in the minds of those who served God faithfully, and found themselves not more highly favoured, or perhaps less so, than the workers of iniquity. And besides perplexity, there was danger of jealousy and murmuring, as there is also even now under the dispensation of the Gospel, however clearly we may have been taught, that tribulation in this world is often to be taken for a token of the love of God, and therefore ought in such case to be matter of rejoicing.

The two principal arguments here urged, against envying the present prosperity of the wicked, are the misery which awaits them in the end, and the happiness which is in store for the righteous. The first is the chief topic of this first part of the psalm. "They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." This general assertion is frequently repeated, and set before us in various points of view. The miserable end of evil doers is contrasted with the peace and blessedness of those who trust in the Lord and do good. The disposition of the wicked to plot against the just is pointed out; and we are made to see at one glance how surely their devices fail, when we are told, "The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming." In vain is their sword drawn and their bow bent against the good; in vain do they seek to vent their enmity against God by doing harm to them that are his. He is able to make all their devices of none effect. He can bring to nothing both their undertakings and themselves.

We may apply these reflections to our own case, with so much the more of force, in proportion as we are more fully informed of the end of the ungodly. Be it that they now prosper, be it that they thrive at our expense, be it that the dishonest make most gain, the overbearing usurp most power, the artful obtain most credit; and succeed in doing so all their life long; still what is it, what is this life, what is all its length? a vapour that soon vanishes away; a dream, and behold we waken in eternity. And then think of an eternity of misery. Consider who can dwell with "everlasting burnings?" Isa. 33. 14. Remember that there "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9. 44. Remember these things. Consider these things. Think of these things. And then, even if there were not on the other hand the promise of life eternal to the faithful, there would be most ample warrant for David's godly counsel: "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."



*David argueth further against envying evil doers.*

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again : but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

22 For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth ; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.

23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD : and he delighteth in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down : for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

25 I have been young, and *now* am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth ; and his seed *is* blessed.

27 Depart from evil, and do good ; and dwell for evermore.

28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints ; they are preserved for ever : but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

31 The law of his God *is* in

his heart ; none of his steps shall slide.

32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land : when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree.

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not : yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

37 Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright : for the end of *that man is* peace.

38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together : the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD : *he is* their strength in the time of trouble.

40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them : he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

## LECTURE 871.

*The eternal blessedness of the righteous.*

One chief argument against envying the prosperity of the wicked is the consideration of their miserable end ; another is the happiness, infinitely beyond comparison with the transitory pleasures of ungodliness, the happiness which God uniformly connects with faith and well-doing. "Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Ver. 3. This is written at the beginning of this psalm. Again, "The meek shall inherit the earth ; and shall delight themselves

in the abundance of peace." Ver. 11. These words are in part quoted by our blessed Lord in his sermon on the mount; see Matt. 5. 5; so that they apply to Christians under the Gospel as well as to Israelites under the Law. And we may justly hence conclude, that they who are blessed of God, whatsoever tribulation they may meet with here, enjoy even the hours of their suffering and sorrow, much more than the wicked enjoy the gains of their ungodliness.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way." Yes, there is an indescribable delight in knowing that God orders our steps, in finding that we are doing that which He commands, and in knowing that it is by means of his assistance that we do it. There is a joy which no other course of life can yield, in walking in the path of God's commandments; in having Him when we fall to lift us up, when we want to satisfy us, when we are assaulted to defend us, and when we shall be brought to judgment to acquit us. Even in respect to the common necessities of life, it is rare to meet with any who serve God faithfully whose wants are not supplied by Him sufficiently. So surely are his faithful servants industrious, sober, honest, and prudent. So seldom do any want for bread except the idle, the drunken, the dishonest, and the wasteful. But the great gain of godliness is in the end thereof. Let us wait and see the end. Let us call to mind the exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Heb. 10. 36, 37. Or let us, as exhorted in this psalm, "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." We may see him for a while in great weakness, or it may be laid low in the grave. But let us look again, and behold, he is raised in power, and glory, and immortality; he is made triumphant over sin and death, he is exalted to the possession of riches that never fail, of honours that never fade, of pleasures that never cease to satisfy during a life which never ends.

*David declareth his sin, his sufferings, and his sorrow.*

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

- 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
- 2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.
- 3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither *is there any* rest in my bones because of my sin.
- 4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
- 5 My wounds stink *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.
- 6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.
- 7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease*: and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
- 8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
- 9 LORD, all my desire *is* before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.
- 10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
- 11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.
- 12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me*: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.
- 13 But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; and *I was* as a dumb *man* *that* openeth not his mouth.
- 14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.
- 15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O LORD my God.
- 16 For I said, *Hear me*, lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against me.
- 17 For I *am* ready to halt, and my sorrow *is* continually before me.
- 18 For I will declare *mine* iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.
- 19 But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.
- 20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow *the thing that* good *is*.
- 21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.
- 22 Make haste to help me, O LORD my salvation.

## LECTURE 872.

*How to frustrate the malice of evil men and wicked spirits.*

It has been thought that this psalm refers to some very sore disease, with which David was afflicted, when inspired to write it. But more probably he is describing the vileness of his transgression, and the anguish of his sorrow, by images taken from the symptoms of leprosy; a disease which seems to be frequently



referred to as a type of that worst of all diseases, sin. It was his soul that was goaded by the arrows of compunction. It was his heart that was heavy with the burden of his iniquity. They were the wounds of his mind that rankled through the foolishness and wickedness of his acts. The expressions which he here makes use of fill up that solemn but brief confession, which we read in the history of Samuel: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord." And hence we are better able to account for the declaration of God's free forgiveness: "And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin." 2 Sam. 12. 13. When we sorrow for sin as David did, when our contrition is like his, such as makes our strength to fail, and our eyes to be dim with weeping, when the agonies of a most loathsome disease are but just images of the pain and shame which we feel in reflecting on our chief transgressions, then we may hope to hear the like comfortable words of pardon spoken with power to our souls.

When David fell, his enemies took advantage of his fall, and they were encouraged and multiplied against him. When we transgress, we give occasion to the enemies of the Gospel to rejoice; and we also give opportunity to the spiritual enemies of our souls, to lay fresh snares against us, and to redouble their furious assaults. Both of these considerations ought to weigh with us as reasons against giving way to temptation ever so little. From both of these evil consequences we ought to pray that God would be pleased to deliver us, by delivering us from the power of our sins, and so to frustrate both his enemies and ours. Let us remember, that we for our parts cannot by any means take a better course to baffle their malicious expectations, than by adopting this purpose of David: "I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin." Worldly wisdom would teach us to conceal our offences, and to shrink from exposing them to the scrutiny of the world. But if by humble confession, and godly sorrow, we both prove and practise sincere repentance, if on repenting we are forgiven, if being forgiven we are strengthened, and attain to amendment of life, then the triumphing of the wicked is speedily at an end, and the malice of evil spirits is effectually defeated; then others, sinners like ourselves, are encouraged to repent, the hearts of the righteous are gladdened, the truth of the Gospel is magnified, the gift of grace is justified, and above all, God is greatly glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*David reflecteth on the vanity of this life.*To the chief Musician, *even* to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

- 1 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.
- 2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was stirred.
- 3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue,
- 4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; *that* I may know how frail I am.
- 5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.
- 6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.
- 7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.
- 8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.
- 9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.
- 10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.
- 11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.
- 12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers were.
- 13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

## LECTURE 873.

*By what means our life may cease to be vanity.*

It was an excellent resolution of David, to watch narrowly against the temptation of offending with his tongue, whilst he was suffering under a severe trial. In the case of Job, faithful and patient as he was, we may see to what rash murmurs the tongue is apt to proceed, if allowed its liberty. From the behaviour of our blessed Lord we may learn how to practise silence in due season. For "when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing." Matt. 27. 12. But when the psalmist at length speaks, it is in a tone of godly meditation, and in the language of devout prayer. Under affliction, persecution, or false accusation, it is well to be silent till we have occasion to speak profitably to the hearers, and devoutly towards God. But let us watch that the fire which meanwhile burns within us, and which at length breaks forth in words, is not the heat of passion, but the fervour of devotion, is not fed with wrath, pride, or sullen

discontent, but is kindled by a sense of God's great love as proved even by the chastisements of his hand.

Such appears to have been the frame of mind in which David wrote the words before us; words in which he was guided by God's Spirit to express thoughts fit for us to think, and petitions fit for us to offer up, when we like him are overtaken by any manner of affliction. At such a season let us pray God to make us deeply sensible of our mortality. Let us reflect how short our time is at the longest; how altogether vain our state is at the best. Let us see in its true light the nothingness of all that men are here so anxious to acquire, and so greatly troubled to lose. What is all the wealth, the glory, the joy, of this world, but as a show, whose shifting scenes abide their short hour, and then disappear for ever? And how inexplicable is the folly of caring and toiling to heap up riches, of which we know not who will gather them; whilst we neglect to lay up treasure in heaven, which we might be sure to enjoy there, world without end!

"And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." If with David, we have hope in God, and if it is the displeasure of God that we fear, if it is for our sin that we are sorrowful, and for pardon that we are anxiously and earnestly desirous, then we are not disquieting ourselves in vain; these hopes and fears, these sorrows, cares, and fervent supplications, relate to no vain show, but to an everlasting reality. Under chastisement we fret not, we murmur not, for we know that it is God's doing; and we thankfully acknowledge, that our affliction is light and momentary, as compared with that "eternal weight of glory" which with God's good grace it "worketh for us." 2 Cor. 4. 17. Nay and even in itself our present life becomes no longer vain, when all our present hopes and fears, pleasures and pains, are submitted in prayer to almighty God, and are made matter of humble dependence on his mercy, and of reverent resignation to his will. Then we may beseech Him to remove his stroke, and implore Him to spare his own goodly workmanship, and may intercede either for longer life, or for larger grace; and provided we still ever add, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done," Luke 22. 42, our cares, our desires, and our petitions, being acceptable to God, through Christ, though they relate in part to this transitory life, yet minister even now unto God's glory, and will redound hereafter to our endless gain.



*David sheweth the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices.*

To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

4 Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

5 Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

17 But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

## LECTURE 874.

*The character of the Messiah as foreshewn in this psalm.*

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, when it is argued that the law could not by its sacrifices "make the comers thereunto perfect," could not justify them in the sight of God, this psalm is referred

to, in the course of the argument, as taking away, denying, and disclaiming the efficacy of the legal sacrifices. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." Heb. 10. 1, 5—7. These words then are to be considered as having been spoken prophetically by David as in the person of Christ. And if one portion of the psalm is to be so considered, it is probable that the whole ought to be so interpreted. Thus viewed, most forcibly does it express the humiliation wherewith He humbled Himself, who left the glory which He had with the Father before the worlds began, in order to be the true, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice for the sins of all the world. And excellently was it adapted, according to this application of it, which the Hebrews were evidently familiar with, to prevent them from expecting an earthly sovereign in the person of their King Messiah. He was to be One that would wait patiently, would cry painfully, would be in trouble and give thanks for deliverance, would speak of all mankind as of brethren, children of the same heavenly Father with Himself. He was to be our Sacrifice by dying for us, fulfilling all that had been prefigured in the sacrifices ordained in the law, fulfilling all this by dying on the cross; and delighting to fulfil it. He was to preach the Gospel to the poor. He was to be heard praying, as One that needed help, however mighty Himself to deliver others. He was to be heard praying to be relieved from a cup of woe filled up with the iniquities of all mankind; and describing his low and poor estate by saying that He had not where to lay his head. Such was the Messiah, as here foretold in the Old Testament. Such was Christ Jesus as set before us in the history of the New Testament. The only difference is this, that there He asks forgiveness for his enemies, here He prays that they may be brought to shame and to destruction. Doubtless both prayers are heard, both petitions will be fulfilled. Justice and mercy each will have its own. The blood that was shed for all, and will save many, cries out for vengeance against some. And the same lips which pleaded for such as know no better, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" Luke 23. 34; acknowledged in the case of such as wilfully betray Him, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born." Matt. 26. 24.

*David complaineth of the treachery of his friend.*

To the chief musician, A psalm of David.

- 1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor : the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.
- 2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive ; and he shall be blessed upon the earth : and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.
- 3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing : thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.
- 4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me : heal my soul ; for I have sinned against thee.
- 5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish ?
- 6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity : his heart gathereth iniquity to itself ; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.
- 7 All that hate me whisper together against me : against me do they devise my hurt.
- 8 An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him : and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
- 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.
- 10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.
- 11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
- 12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.
- 13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

## LECTURE 875.

*The sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.*

"I speak not of you all : " said our Lord to his disciples, "I know whom I have chosen : but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." John 13. 18. Thus does He apply to Himself, and to the treachery of Judas, one of the verses of this psalm. Let us then consider the whole of it as prophetic of Christ. When we have opportunity to relieve the wants of the destitute, let us rejoice to remember our Saviour's words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25. 40. Let us be thankful to be assured, that if thus we relieve Christ in his sick members, by our actually relieving them for his sake, then the Lord will be the Preserver of our lives, our Defender from the malice of our enemies ; though we be weak He will strengthen us, though sick He will watch over us, and wait on us ; though He keep us not free from tribulation, He will give us such support and comfort under it, as is signified by this expressive figure, "thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."



If our Lord can so fully reckon our distresses his, as to say to those who relieve them, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat," Matt. 25. 35, we need not be surprised to find Him taking to Himself in like manner the guilt of our iniquity, in such prophetic words as these: "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." But in these words thus viewed what a wonderful union is implied, an union of the manhood with the Godhead, and of Him who was holy both as God and as man, with us men, frail sinful men! What grace and mercifulness is this in Thee, most mighty Lord, that Thou shouldest vouchsafe thus to speak, as though to give us the more lively assurance that Thou hast in very truth and deed borne all the burden of our sins, and made atonement for all our iniquity! And to think that Thou didst not only bear the burden, but also feel the pain, and undergo the shame, and submit to be numbered with transgressors, and to have a murderer preferred before Thee, and to allow thine enemies to triumph over Thee for a time, and even to let thine own familiar friend betray Thee! To think that Thou, the Son of the most high God, didst thus submit to the indignities of thy creature man, how do these thoughts overpower us with an agony of compunction for our sins, and with an ecstasy of thankfulness for our pardon!

But the inspired words before us, besides speaking prophetically of the sufferings of Christ, lead our thoughts to his resurrection and ascension. His enemies are heard to say, "an evil disease," or as it is in the margin, "a thing of Belial" "cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more." They are rejoiced to think that He had died the death of a malefactor; and they felt assured that He would never again return to life. "But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up that I may requite them." This prayer was fulfilled in the resurrection of our Lord, and in the dreadful destruction of Jerusalem. "And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever." This perhaps relates to the ascension of Christ, and to his sitting at the right hand of God. And as He has assured us that He is gone to prepare a place for us, we may apply the words to his supporting us in a life of holiness, and to his establishing us in an eternity of happiness. Blessed then "be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen." So be it now and evermore. God be praised for all his goodness to his people! God be praised for all his redemption by his Son! God be praised for allowing us to hope, that even as Christ vouchsafed to bear our sins, so shall we be exalted to share his glory!

*The psalmist devoutly longeth after God.*

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

- 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?
- 3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
- 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holiday.
- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.
- 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.
- 7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
- 8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.
- 9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?
- 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

## LECTURE 876.

*The joy of hoping in the midst of affliction.*

"Blessed are they," says our Saviour, "which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." *Matt.* 5. 6. What a reproof to those who feel no taste for spiritual things; no appetite for proficiency in holiness! Our desires for growth in grace, for advancement in the knowing and doing of God's will, ought to be as constant and as earnest as our craving for daily food. What then ought to be the language of our souls towards God Himself? Hear the answer as written in this psalm: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Far then be from us the groundless notion, that there is no room for warmth of feeling in religion, no scope for liveliness of affection. What language could more powerfully express the utmost vehemence of emotion, what figure could more effectually set before our eyes

the ardour of devotion which it becomes us to cherish towards the Lord, than the thirst of a hart panting after water brooks?

But earnest longing may for a time have only tears to feed upon. And the more we really long for close communion with God, so much the more shall we lament to find ourselves at any time forgetful of his goodness, or guilty of neglecting his commandments. And bitter, most bitter, at such seasons, is the reproach of those who say to us in mockery, "Where is thy God?" To find ourselves the scorn of the ungodly, and to call to mind how happy we have been at other times in the company of such as were faithful and devout, joining with them in prayers and praises, in holy places and on holy days, to compare this happy fellowship of saints with exposure to the scoffing or persecution of the wicked, this is indeed a sore trial to our spirits. No wonder that at such seasons our tears are apt to flow. No wonder that under such distressing circumstances our souls are cast down and disquieted within us.

But, as the apostle writes to the Romans, "we are saved by hope." Rom. 8. 24. Our salvation is in prospect, not in possession. It is not in possession, but it is in prospect. And in our worst of troubles, in this trouble of feeling ourselves estranged from God, hope is as an anchor to the soul; and faith being the substance, or full assurance of things hoped for, we are enabled to say confidently, "I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Our souls may be cast down within us for the present, but they are soon raised up again by the prospect of future glory. We may be distressed at the recollection of joys we have experienced, under circumstances more favourable than the present for the awakening, the enlivening, and the edifying of the soul. Yet we can look forward, and say, "The Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." We can look forward to the time when we shall again make known unto God all our requests with joy; communicating to Him with the confidence of sons, our hopes and fears, our rejoicing and our griefs, communicating all devoutly to the Lord, in prayers and in songs of praise. We can look forward with hope. And whilst we look forward, we begin actually to enjoy the things we hope for; "rejoicing," as it is written by St. Paul in the same epistle, "rejoicing in hope;" Rom. 12. 12; hoping, at the very time when we are saying to our souls, "Hope thou in God;" and praising Him in the very act of saying, "I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."



*The psalmist prayeth for access to divine ordinances.*

<p>1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.</p> <p>2 For thou <i>art</i> the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?</p> <p>3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy</p>	<p>hill, and to thy tabernacles.</p> <p>4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.</p> <p>5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, <i>who is</i> the health of my countenance, and my God.</p>
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## LECTURE 877.

*Of hoping for yet further increase of church accommodation.*

It has been thought that this psalm was originally a part of the psalm preceding; each of them having the same words at the conclusion, and those words forming a kind of chorus to the former of the two psalms. And this would account for there being no title to this psalm at all. But there is no improbability in supposing that the same writer, whosoever he might be, was guided to write two different sacred songs with the same conclusion to each. And as to there being no title to this psalm, this is the case with several others. And there is so much uncertainty in regard to the time when these titles were given to the psalms, and as to the authority which is due to them, that we cannot draw any certain conclusion either from there being no title at all, or from any one which there may happen to be. Even the name of David, which occurs in the titles of nearly half the psalms, is not prefixed to some psalms which we know to be of his writing. For we learn from the New Testament that two of those which have no titles at all, namely the second and the ninety fifth, were written by the son of Jesse. See Acts 4. 25. Heb. 4. 7. And generally we may consider, with great probability, that not only all which have his name in the titles are of his composition, but also many more which are not so ascribed to him.

And these are questions of more importance than at first sight they are apt to appear. For if we know the writer of the psalm, we are more likely to ascertain to what particular circumstances the psalm refers. And by knowing these, we are more likely to understand the exact meaning of the psalm itself; whether it be prayer, or praise, or meditation, whether it be profitable for exhortation, reproof, or instruction in righteousness. And to the devout reader of God's word, the object of first importance is to understand it exactly as God meant it to be understood. We are not to take up without trouble the first impression which presents

itself. Neither are we to seek for meanings which will best tally with our own notions of what the meaning of the Bible ought to be; as if, forsooth, we could tell better than He who inspired the sacred volume, what things are fit for Him to teach. No, we must search diligently what his mind really is as here revealed. And seeing that He has thought fit to interweave the thread of his revelation with the lives of those whom He has made use of in revealing it, with their conduct and with their character, we are thankful to know any thing relative to them which may help to throw light upon their writings. Whilst, at the same time, in cases where nothing can be learnt, we are thankful to find, that their writings may still become highly profitable to us, viewed simply as written by whom we know not, and on what occasion we know not, but certainly under the influence of God's inspiration.

In this light then we may regard the psalm before us. And we may learn from it, that if we are encompassed by the multitude of the ungodly, and exposed to wrong from the deceitful and unjust, instead of seeking to avenge ourselves, or aiming in the spirit of strife to redress our own wrongs, we ought to place our cause in the hands of the Lord. And if, for a time, He seem to set his face against us, so that we go mourning as those whom He has cast off, we ought to pray to Him, to pray for his light and truth to be sent forth to our assistance. And especially we learn, that if at any time we should be forcibly debarred, as the writer of this psalm appears to have been, from access to the public ordinances of religion, we ought to pray earnestly, that God would be pleased to make us partakers of these blessings. And if we are not ourselves so debarred, we may at least hence learn to pray for those who are. We may reflect on the multitudes in our own land, who for want of room in the tabernacles of God are shut out from partaking of his altar. A painful reflexion; a melancholy case. And when we remember that it is the case of millions, who dwell in a country professedly Christian, the thought is indeed enough to cast down the soul, and to disquiet it within us. But let us still hope in God. Let us hope that many of these will with us yet praise Him. Let us thank Him for the enlarged opportunities of praising Him already given unto many. Let us pray often, and also give as much as lies in our power, that such opportunities may be enlarged still more.

*The psalmist, under affliction, professeth trust in God.*

To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what* work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

2 *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; *how* thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.

8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. *Selah.*

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.

10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.

13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

## LECTURE 878.

*The church under reverses must trust in God.*

This is one of those psalms of whose date we can learn nothing from the title. And whilst some ascribe it to David, others consider that it was written by one of the prophets in the times of the Babylonish captivity. It certainly describes a state of great national distress, much more like to the condition of the Israelites when under the power of their Assyrian conquerors, than at any period during David's lifetime. But as there is mention made of their armies still going forth, though God went not forth with them, it is more probable that the psalm refers to some of the periods previous to the captivity; when this dreadful blow was indeed about to fall upon those who occupied the throne of David, but when it had not yet fallen. And some have suggested, that it may have been written by Isaiah, when Hezekiah was invaded by Sennacherib, and when Rabshakeh brought his master's daring defiance up to the very walls of Jerusalem. For it is mentioned in the Second Book of Chronicles, that on this occasion "Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven." 2 Chron. 32. 20.



At such a season of affliction, with the consciousness of the sin which had provoked God to inflict it, the king, and the prophet, and the more devout among the people, might well remember with bitterness of regret what great things God had done for their fathers in time past. But the Spirit of God, speaking by the Psalmist, teaches them to call his past mercies to remembrance, not as a topic of regret, but as a ground of hope and confidence for the future. It was God who had given them the victory of old; it was his right hand not theirs. And therefore, if God could be prevailed upon to help them, they might conquer as in times past. And He might be prevailed upon, by means of earnest prayer. He had indeed cast off his people, and put them to an open shame. He went not forth with their armies. He had made them to fly before their enemies, and to become a spoil unto them, "like sheep appointed for meat." He had scattered them among the heathen; the ten tribes having been lately carried away into captivity, when Hezekiah began to reign. God's people had indeed been thus treated by Him as worthless in his eyes, and made an object of scorn to the nations round about them. Yet for all this, God was the only King to whom they could look for help in their distress. It was for Him to command deliverances for Jacob. Through Him they might even now overthrow their foes. And the mention of his past deliverances was an encouragement for them to hope, as well as a plea with Him to grant their prayer, that He would be merciful to them yet once more.

Here was comfort for the people in the depth of their distress; comfort and instruction as to the way of safety. Here is comfort and instruction for us likewise; and especially for Christians as a body, or for the church as a community, when we are under any common affliction, and are seemingly given over to be a prey and a derision to those who bear ill will against our Zion. God has done great things for us already. Let us rejoice in the remembrance of his mercies. We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, how long ago the church of Christ was planted in this land, according to the doctrine and discipline of Christ's apostles. We have heard also how grievously it became corrupted in the lapse of ages, through its connexion with the grossly corrupted church of Rome. And we have heard of its blessed Reformation. If it have since been weakened by divisions, if it be now threatened with the loss of its national establishment, still let us trust in God, and pray to Him for help; let us look to Him, and not to man for victory. And let the remembrance of that which He has done for us of old, encourage us to pray with confidence of hope, and with full assurance of faith, that He will again save us from our enemies, and put to shame them that hate us.

*The psalmist enquireth why God afflicteth his people.*

- 15 My confusion *is* continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,  
 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.  
 17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.  
 18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;  
 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.  
 20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;  
 21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.  
 22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.  
 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.  
 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?  
 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.  
 26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

## LECTURE 879.

*The joint interest of the righteous and the wicked.*

This latter part of the psalm seems to prove very plainly, that the whole is to be understood as the language of those who had served God devoutly, though they were suffering by the grievous chastisements inflicted on such as had most grossly transgressed his laws. There was a faithful remnant in the worst of times. When the rest of the nation followed after idols, there were those who cleaved to the true God. There was a Hezekiah, and there was an Isaiah, and there were others likeminded, when the idolatries of Judah and Jerusalem had provoked God to bring a destroying army close to the gates of Sion, and when He suffered the blaspheming language of a Rabshakeh to be heard in the ears of the people on the wall. But how must such blasphemy have shocked the minds of the devout! How must it have grieved them that were faithful in the land, and have filled them with shame and confusion of face, to have the Lord God of heaven and earth set on a level, in the impious language of Sennacherib, with the gods of Hena, Ivah, and Sepharvaim! See 2 Kings 18. 34.

It is no uncommon thing, however strange it may seem, for the righteous to be thus mixed up on earth in the judgments which are sent in wrath upon the wicked. They to whose case this psalm was fitted evidently thought it strange, and yet they murmured not. Their conscience testified to themselves, and they therefore testified to God, that they had not forgotten Him,

had not dealt falsely in his covenant, that their heart was not turned back, neither had their steps declined from his way; no, not when He had reduced them to the extremity of distress, and given them over, as it seemed, to dangers the most imminent. Still they had the fear of God before their eyes. Still they were duly sensible that if they should ever worship any other god but Him, He would be sure to search it out, seeing that no secret could be hidden from Him. And still they were willing to expose their lives for his sake. And it was out of zeal for his cause, and faith in his help, that they were resolved to hold out the city against the enemy, at no small risk of death, rather than come into the terms proposed by their blaspheming invader. That under such circumstances they should be placed in jeopardy so imminent perplexed them greatly. "Awake," say they, "why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?"

To these questions many reasons might be suggested in reply. One of the most obvious is this; that God often allows his faithful servants to suffer in the calamities which He inflicts upon the faithless and disobedient, on purpose to make us feel our intimate connection with each other; on purpose to convince every member of the community, that he has responsibilities and interests arising from his relation to all the rest. We are mostly too apt to look upon ourselves as insulated individuals, single beings separated from all the rest of our kind so completely, that we have no one to answer for but ourselves, nobody's sins to suffer for but our own. The truth is, on the contrary, that God looks upon all mankind as one great family, and deals with all as dead by the sin of one, even Adam, and redeemed by the blood of One, even Christ. And He requires every one who is sensible of the mercy of redemption to bestir himself in communicating his convictions to his brethren. He makes all who know the truth, and love it, answerable for imparting this knowledge and this love to all around them. We are one family in Christ Jesus, interested in a common salvation. And each branch of this one family has many common interests as a church and nation, as a country, as a neighbourhood, as a diocese, as a parish, or as a single household. And who can say how largely the sins of the most ungodly in any such a community might not have been prevented by zeal more active, or by prayers more fervent, on the part of its more faithful members? Why then should we be surprised, if they who are slow to feel for each other, are made to suffer with each other? or if they who have not prevented their brethren in their sins, have to share with them in their punishment?



*The psalmist addresseth Christ as the Spouse of the church.*

To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil,  
A song of loves.

- 1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
- 2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
- 3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.
- 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
- 5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.
- 6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.
- 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
- 8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.
- 9 Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
- 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;
- 11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.
- 12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.
- 13 The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.
- 14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.
- 15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.
- 16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
- 17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

## LECTURE 880.

*The chief glory of the church is inward grace.*

It is highly probable that this psalm refers in the first instance to the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt. See 1 Kings 3. 1. But we know from the Epistle to the Hebrews that it applies prophetically to Christ. He is the King touching whom these words were spoken. He is the Bridegroom of whom it is here testified, "Thou art fairer than the children of men;" He to whom St. John bears witness that

He was "full of grace and truth," confirming his report by saying, "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." John 1. 14. Christ is the Conqueror whose majestic progress is here celebrated; whose strength is in his truth, meekness, and righteousness, whose victories are achieved in the hearts of his enemies, and of whose kingly throne and sceptre it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." These are the words which are quoted from this psalm in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as spoken "unto the Son." Heb. 1. s. And whilst this shews us that the psalm applies to Christ, it teaches us to regard Him as One higher than the angels, as One who is no less than God.

And if Christ be the King whose marriage is here meant, who but the church can be intended by his spouse? And what is the gold of Ophir, what but the decent order and mysterious authority with which the church stands ornamented, answerable as far as possible to the grace, glory, and inestimable riches with which the heavenly Bridegroom is adorned? But whilst "her clothing is of wrought gold," it is the distinguishing excellency of the church to be "all glorious within." And every member of the same ought to take unto himself, in this sense, the exhortation to forget his father's house, to cast off his natural inheritance of a corrupted will, to be no longer conformed to the world, the family of which all are naturally members, but to study to please Christ with a reverence, devotion, and affection, such as it becomes a wife to feel towards her husband. This is the inward glory of each member of the church, love proved in obedience of the soul. This is that "hidden man of the heart," 1 Pet. 3. 4, or inmost character of the human being ordered aright, which the apostle recommends as the appropriate adorning of each Christian wife, and which we may justly consider as the most precious ornament of the whole church viewed as the one spouse of Christ. May we who are among the children here promised to the church, be partakers of this her highest glory! And as it is her privilege to make her children "princes in all the earth," may we who have been called to this high dignity, fulfil it in some sort now, by ruling our own spirit, and becoming in point of holiness and happiness the most excellent of the earth! And may we enjoy its future fulfilment, as foretold in the book of Revelation; where the redeemed out of every nation are heard to say with thankfulness, "We shall reign on the earth." Rev. 5. 10.

*The psalmist expresseth entire confidence in God.*

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A song upon Alamoth.

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| <p>1 God <i>is</i> our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.</p> <p>2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;</p> <p>3 <i>Though</i> the waters thereof roar and be troubled, <i>though</i> the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.</p> <p>4 <i>There is</i> a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy <i>place</i> of the tabernacles of the most high.</p> <p>5 God <i>is</i> in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and <i>that</i> right early.</p> <p>6 The heathen raged, the king-</p> | <p>doms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.</p> <p>7 The LORD of hosts <i>is</i> with us; the God of Jacob <i>is</i> our refuge. Selah.</p> <p>8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.</p> <p>9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.</p> <p>10 Be still, and know that I <i>am</i> God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.</p> <p>11 The LORD of hosts <i>is</i> with us; the God of Jacob <i>is</i> our refuge. Selah.</p> |
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## LECTURE 881.

*The source of true greatness of mind.*

True greatness of mind is attainable by man, only by means of humble dependency on the strength of almighty God. Obstinacy, and pride, and self sufficiency, do indeed not unfrequently lay claim to the glory of this character, and seem at first sight to have some ground for claiming it. There are doubtless those, who on no better principle than self righteousness, or with no sense of righteousness at all, but merely by dint of ignorance and presumption, are persuaded that they could calmly abide the wreck of elements, and the ruin of a devoted world. But if we would be convinced how far such a spirit is from great, we have only to consider how absurd and almost ridiculous it is, to conceive of a being so frail, feeble, and comparatively insignificant in point of size and strength, as man, braving the violence of mountains moved from their place, or of the troubled waters of the ocean. The pride of our corrupted hearts may indeed respond to notions such as these, when their absurdity is concealed by the pomp of language in which they are expressed. But when we consider things in their true light, we must be free to own, that for such an one as man not to fear in the midst of a falling world would be the sign not of courage but of foolishness, not of greatness but weakness of mind.

But now see how reasonable, and therefore how worthy to be



admired and sought after, is fearlessness amongst dangers the most imminent, when it arises from reliance upon God. He is the Creator of all things; and all are entirely at his disposal, entirely under his controul. If then He be with us, who can be against us? If God be in the midst of our Zion, what rage of man, what storm of elements, can do us harm, except as far as He thinks fit? This was the confidence of God's people of old time. And it was in this confidence that the inhabitants of Jerusalem oftentimes enjoyed peace and safety, when it appeared as if their enemies must have certainly destroyed them. Their river was to them a source of peaceable and plentiful refreshment, when all around them was war and violence. When "the heathen raged, and the kingdoms were moved," then did their faith in God prove to be a fountain of security, and his help was a river, the streams whereof made glad the city of God. "He uttered his voice, the earth melted." At his word the world was made. By his word it could at any moment be destroyed. Much more were the enemies of his people made to melt away before those who could truly say, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Let us then, as here invited, "behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." Let us review in the history of his chosen people, the havoc which God made among their enemies, and the prosperity which He secured for themselves. Let us observe how frequently and marvellously He made their wars to cease, by giving them the victory, and by giving their enemies for a prey into their hands. Let us hear Him one while bidding them "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," Exod. 14. 13, and at another time saying, "The people are yet too many," Judges 7. 4, and so teaching that, as Jonathan observed, "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." 1 Sam. 14. 6. Surely the review of these things is fitted to allay all fear but that of God, to convince us that He, as God, is able alike to save and to destroy. Let us but have Him with us; and if we pray fervently, and believe heartily, and ask as He commands us in his Son's name, He will not be against us; let us but have Him with us, and we need not fear what man can do unto us, we will not fear what Satan can devise against us. Neither the storm of elements, nor the fury of the people, nor the frown of kings, nor the much more formidable onset of the great enemy of souls, need move the calm self-possession of those, who have for their Defender the Lord God almighty, the Maker of all men great and small, the Lord of angels good and evil, the Ruler of the universe and of all that is therein. This is man's only true strength, to be strong in the Lord. This is man's only true courage, to fear Him, and so have nothing else to be afraid of. And thus may the least and weakest amongst men be truly great in mind, when they are truly faithful, humble, and devout in soul.

*The psalmist calleth on all to glorify God.*

To the chief Musician, A psalm for the sons of Korah.

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| <p>1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.</p> <p>2 For the LORD most high is terrible; <i>he is</i> a great King over all the earth.</p> <p>3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.</p> <p>4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.</p> <p>5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.</p> | <p>6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.</p> <p>7 For God <i>is</i> the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.</p> <p>8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.</p> <p>9 The princes of the people are gathered together, <i>even</i> the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth <i>belong</i> unto God: he is greatly exalted.</p> |
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## LECTURE 882.

*The delight and advantage of singing God's praise.*

Here is a song of triumph, and a song of praise, and an appeal to all to join in praising God because of his greatness and his goodness. "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." The psalmist calls for a vehement expression of joy. And he seems to reprove that lukewarmness of affection, which under the plea of reverence and sobriety of mind, would forbid all energy in devotion, all fervency in prayer, all ecstasy of adoration in praise. There is indeed a great difference in the habits of different times and countries. And it would ill suit our notions of decency in divine service, either to clap the hands, or to shout for joy. But we may learn from these expressions that our worship ought to be animated with the deepest feelings of the heart, with fear and hope, with grief and gladness, with abhorrence and love, each directed towards its proper objects, with an energy and fulness proportioned to the greatness of divine things and of our own eternal interests.

And this exhortation of the psalmist applies to all men, not merely because he says, "all ye people," but because the reasons which he gives for thus magnifying God are such as hold good with all men. "The Lord most high is terrible." God is to be feared by all, because of his almighty power. Again, "he is a great King over all the earth." His sovereignty, though exercised in an extraordinary manner in the land of Israel, was not confined to that country, was not confined to any country, it extended, and does extend, and always will extend to all countries of the world, and to all worlds in the universe. And his *subduing* the nations under the Israelites of old was not only a proof

of his absolute sway, but also a proof of his exercising his power, according to his own infinite wisdom, for the promoting of truth and righteousness, and for the discomfiture of that most gross falsehood, the worship of false gods, and of all its accompanying iniquity. Let then all who are of a truth his people rejoice in Him with all their hearts. Let them delight in choosing as God chooses for them. Let them be thankful that He vouchsafes to make choice in their behalf. And let all men, remembering that God made them all, so devoutly submit themselves to his will, as to be meet to be entitled his people of a truth.

But it is here especially remarked in celebration of God's honour, that "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." These words are generally supposed to refer to some occasion when the ark was carried in solemn state either into the tabernacle or into the temple. And as the ark is thought to be typical of our Saviour, it is considered that his ascension into heaven was shewn forth in this going up of the ark, and was alluded to in the words before us. Whether this be so or not, and to whatsoever ceremonial in God's worship of old time these words refer, we shall do well to regard them as warranting us in the practice of exalting God's praises both by the exertion of our voices and by the use of instruments of music. Let us as we are here very urgently exhorted "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises." Four times in one verse is the duty of singing praise insisted on. And the psalmist adds in the verse which follows: "For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." Sound without sense, words uttered which we feel not in the heart, this is no acceptable praise to God. The conviction of his greatness must occupy our minds, the persuasion of his goodness and loving kindness must animate our hearts; and viewing Him by faith as seated upon his holy throne in heaven, we must pour forth the best words of adoration that our thoughts can frame, and in sounds the most solemn, harmonious, and forcible, that our skill can compass or our voices utter. And what can we do on earth that yields us more present satisfaction, more profitably employs our present time, or more largely fits us for entering upon the happiness of heaven, than thus with heart and voice to glorify that great and good Being to whom we owe both time and eternity, all the joys which we now have and all which we hope to possess for ever and ever?



*The psalmist dwelleth on the beauty and security of Zion.**A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah.*

- 1 Great *is* the LORD, and of hosts, in the city of our God: greatly to be praised in the city God will establish it for ever. of our God, in the mountain of Selah. his holiness.
- 2 Beautiful for situation, the lovingkindness, O God, in the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount midst of thy temple. Zion, on the sides of the north, 10 According to thy name, O the city of the great King. God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.
- 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.
- 4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.
- 5 They saw *it*, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. 13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell *it* to the generation following.
- 6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 14 For this God *is* our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death.
- 7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.
- 8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD

## LECTURE 883.

*Our citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem.*

It might be literally true, as undoubtedly it was, that mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem were remarkably "beautiful for situation." But their real beauty and matchless excellency lay in this, that the city was God's city, and the mount was "the mountain of his holiness." When all lands were defiled with the abominations of idolatry, here was a place in which the true God was known, was honoured, and was worshipped after a pattern of his own commanding. When the kings of all other nations were under the false impression that they ruled by their own authority, and could defend themselves by their own strength, here were palaces in which God was well known as a sure refuge. Well might such a place be described as "the joy of the whole earth," the city in which man might dwell most happily, the people on whom the eyes of the Lord might rest with most of approbation. Well may we desire and pray that the like may be the case in our own country, and that we may ever be blest with rulers in whose palaces God is both well known, and humbly acknowledged, as the only Refuge in trouble, the only Author of peace and of prosperity.

The psalmist refers to some occasion when several kings were leagued together against Jerusalem, who on beholding it were

struck with admiration; "they were troubled, and hasted away." Such was the effect wrought upon their minds by Him who was the Defender of Israel. "Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail." Such was the sense of weakness and of helplessness which overcame them, and prevented them from making any assault upon the place. They were dispersed as easily as the ships of Tarshish, as the strongest vessels, built for the longest voyages, were dispersed and shattered by the fury of a storm, whensoever God saw fit. And that which had been heard of God's former dealings was now again experienced. And in like manner we also may experience, if we will, that which we hear and read of in this psalm, namely, that God is a sure Refuge to all them who put their trust in Him.

And in what sense is it here said that God would for ever establish the city here spoken of? Has not Jerusalem long since been made an heap of ruins? And as to the temple on mount Zion, have not our Lord's words been long ago fulfilled, "verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down?" Matt. 24. 2. Surely it is of a spiritual building that the psalmist here speaks. His words may surely be interpreted of that mount and city, which are spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews thus: "ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. 12. 22—24. Let us then be thinking of this heavenly Jerusalem, when we are directed to call to mind the lovingkindness of the Lord in the midst of his temple. Let us remember that we are said to have come to it already. Let us consider that we are so much the more bound to make our light shine before men, that they may glorify our heavenly King. Let us endeavour to make his name known, and to have his praise spread abroad unto the ends of the earth. Let us well weigh our own precious privileges as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us value them highly. Let us endeavour to make them known and valued, throughout all lands, and unto all generations. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Yes, we may add, and beyond death also; He will be our Guide throughout eternity. Here He will lead us in the narrow way. He will admit us hereafter through the strait gate. And as already we dwell with Him by faith, we shall soon behold Him as He is, and be present with Him as sensibly as we now are with each other; and shall then find Him able, as we might do now, to supply more than all our wants, and to satisfy more than all our affections.

*The psalmist giveth instruction to rich and poor.*

To the chief musician, A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1 Hear this, all *ye* people; give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world: call *their* lands after *their* own names.

2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together. 12 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding. 13 This *their way is* their folly: yet *their* posterity approve *their* sayings. Selah.

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and *their* beauty shall consume in the grave from *their* dwelling.

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? 15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; 16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

7 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

8 (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) 18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

9 That he should still live for ever, *and* not see corruption. 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

10 For he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to *others*. 20 Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts *that* perish.

11 Their inward thought *is*, *that* their houses *shall continue* for ever, *and* their dwelling places to all generations; they

## LECTURE 884.

*The rich must beware of pride and the poor of discontent.*

With what a solemn and affecting call on our attention does this psalm begin! "Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: Both low and high, rich and poor, together." And truly the subject treated of deeply concerns these two classes of mankind; the rich that they may learn the vanity of their riches, the poor that they may cease to be discouraged by their poverty. Because money, as the wise man says, "an-



swereth all things," Eccles. 10. 19, because it is the key to all earthly pleasures and possessions, therefore they who have it in abundance are apt to trust in it, to presume upon it, and to despise and oppress those who have it not. This is their temptation. Whilst, on the other hand, they who have none are tempted to despond, and to look upon themselves as exposed to danger from the ill treatment of the rich, and to consider themselves as less highly favoured by the Lord. But see, says the psalmist, for this seems to be his meaning, see how vain a thing wealth is. The wealthy cannot deliver one another from death, they cannot save themselves from dying. The redemption of the life of man, whether from dying, or from that judgment which is after death, is a thing of much greater price than all their wealth; and it must be let alone by them for ever. The most prudent and skilful of them all must die, and they see that it must be so, must die as surely as the most ignorant and dull. They may seek to perpetuate their name by giving it to their houses or estates. But notwithstanding all the fame which they thus acquire, they die as surely as the beasts of the field. Their worldly maxims may be praised and practised by their posterity. But for all this they must be laid in the grave like sheep. They that fared sumptuously every day must become the food of death. And those of them who abuse the power which wealth gives them, will find that in the morning of the resurrection, "the upright shall have dominion over them;" the righteous, however poor, however powerless on earth, will be exalted to the place of power and great glory in heaven.

Let the rich then beware of trusting in their riches. Let them be on their guard against the temptations which, in all ages of the world, have beset the wealthy, the temptations of pride, arrogance, wilfulness, selfishness, and self sufficiency. Let the poor, too, beware of thinking, that because they are poor, God cares less for them. Let them beware of grudging the rich their riches, and murmuring against God in their own poverty. Rather let both rich and poor set their affections on things above. Let them both consider the supreme importance of eternity; and the vanity of all earthly goods, except so far as either by spending them aright, or by being content to do without them, we become more meet for heaven. The glory which we get here by gaining money for ourselves cannot go with us into another world; but the riches of God's grace and mercy can. The highest worldly rank, in the case of one who lives without the knowledge of God, will not exempt its possessor from dying without hope. But they which repent and believe, which love and obey, these whether rich or poor, however sure to die, are privileged to say when death approaches, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me."

*The psalmist setteth forth the judgment of God.*

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.
- 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.
- 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
- 4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.
- 5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
- 6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God *is* judge himself. Selah.
- 7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God.
- 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.
- 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he goats out of thy folds.
- 10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.
- 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.
- 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.
- 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?
- 14 Offer unto God thanks-giving; and pay thy vows unto the most high:
- 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
- 16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?
- 17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.
- 18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.
- 19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.
- 20 Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
- 21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.
- 22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.
- 23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I shew the salvation of God.

## LECTURE 885.

*The end of the formalist, and that of the devout.*

The Lord has here a controversy with his people Israel, which we may apply also to his solemn judgment hereafter to be passed

upon all believers in Christ. The inhabitants of all the world are summoned. The Judge appears in clouds of glory, terrible to his enemies, and gathers together "his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matt. 24. 31. How He will deal with others of mankind we are not here informed. But as to those who have been members of his church, parties to his covenant, professed believers in Christ, either under the Law or under the Gospel, on them He will pass a judgment which will most signally manifest the righteousness of the Judge to a whole approving universe. And the tenour of it is this. He will not be extreme to mark omissions of the ceremonial services of the Law. He would not have those who were bound to pay them think that it was any gain to Him to receive them. He would have them know that all creatures in the world are his, whether man offers them in sacrifice or not. And the thing which He will therefore chiefly look to in judging of our ceremonial observances, is the devotion of heart with which we render them, the thankfulness which animates our praises, the sincerity of our vows, the faithfulness and earnestness of our prayers, and the settled purpose of our souls to glorify Him in all our offerings, and prayers, and praises, and in all the actions of our life. The formalist, then stript of his pretences, will be found to be no other than the wicked. And to have made profession of God's covenant will only aggravate his guilt, if he have been a thief, a liar, or a slanderer in thought, or word, or deed. "Now consider this, ye that forget God." Ye, who because God forbears punishment for a time, suppose that He cares not for your sinning, and fall into such forgetfulness of what God is as to live without Him in the world; consider the truth here set before you. Be assured that the day is coming, when He will expose your hollow heartedness; the day when He, who is now graciously waiting to save you, will be found no less able to destroy. And oh, consider this also, that if you now serve God in earnest, both praising Him with your lips and glorifying Him by the well ordered conversation of your lives, He will shew you his salvation, He will shew it by actually saving you.



*David confesseth his sin and prayeth for pardon.*

To the chief musician, A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

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| <p>1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.</p> <p>2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.</p> <p>3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.</p> <p>4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done <i>this</i> evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.</p> <p>5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.</p> <p>6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden <i>part</i> thou shalt make me to know wisdom.</p> <p>7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.</p> <p>8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; <i>that</i> the bones <i>which</i> thou hast broken may rejoice.</p> <p>9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.</p> <p>10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit</p> | <p>within me.</p> <p>11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.</p> <p>12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me <i>with thy</i> free spirit.</p> <p>13 <i>Then</i> will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.</p> <p>14 Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: <i>and</i> my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.</p> <p>15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.</p> <p>16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give <i>it</i>: thou delightest not in burnt offering.</p> <p>17 The sacrifices of God <i>are</i> a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.</p> <p>18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.</p> <p>19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: <i>then shall</i> they offer bullocks upon <i>thine</i> altar.</p> |
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## LECTURE 886.

*The way of pardon and peace to the penitent.*

Here may the true penitent learn how to open all his grief to God, and how to pour out all his soul in earnest prayer for God's forgiveness. Let him plead God's lovingkindness, and the multitude of his tender mercies. Let him beg to be washed and cleansed, as one that is aware how foul sin makes the soul. Let him without reserve acknowledge his transgression unto God,

and keep the remembrance of it continually before his own mind. And however much it may have been a sin against his fellow-creatures, or against his own self, see 1 Cor. 6. 18, let these considerations be swallowed up in the one all absorbing thought, that he has been guilty of sin against God. He has forgotten God's presence, defied his power, and, worst of all, abused his goodness; so that whatsoever punishment God might inflict, would at the utmost be no more than just. Let the penitent be also not slow to make confession of his birth sin, the corruption of his nature as inherited from Adam; nor unwilling in the pride of his own reason to admit, that this alone does, as God's word teaches, most justly expose him to the wrath of God. And let him be aware that sinful as He is by nature, God may justly require of him, for God has enabled him to attain, truth in the inward parts, and wisdom in the heart.

But how are truth and purity of heart and soul to be attained? how, once lost, are they ever to be regained? The cleansing with hyssop means the sprinkling with the blood of the sacrifice of Christ. See Lev. 14. 2—7. Heb. 9. 14—19. This is that which washes out the stain of sins most foul, and which makes the most abject sinner to hear of joy and gladness. It is for the sake of this that God will hide his face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities; that He will create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. By the blood of Christ we have access to God's presence, we have the gift of God's Spirit, we are restored when we fall, we are upholden when we stand upright. And such is the efficacy of this atonement, such the power of the grace of the Holy Ghost, that even one who, like David, was burdened with bloodguiltiness, might be delivered, cleansed, reconciled, restored to joy, and privileged to glorify the God of his salvation. Let us then, under the burden of our sins resort to the teaching of this pardoned sinner, to learn the way of pardon and of peace. Let us give heed to his instructive words: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Let us note his prayer for Zion and Jerusalem, and study to unite zeal for the welfare of our brethren with concern for our own salvation. And when we hear him rejoicing in the prospect of God's being pleased with "the sacrifices of righteousness," let us be glad to think, that though our services can do absolutely nothing for us in the way of atoning for our sins, yet, Christ having made atonement, and God having for Christ's sake forgiven us, our faith and obedience are pleasing in his sight, and redound to the glory of his name.

*David denounceth the mischiefs of a false and cruel tongue.*

To the chief Musician, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

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| <p>1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God <i>endureth</i> continually.</p> <p>2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.</p> <p>3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.</p> <p>4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O <i>thou</i> deceitful tongue.</p> <p>5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of <i>thy</i> dwelling place, and root thee out</p> | <p>of the land of the living. Selah.</p> <p>6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:</p> <p>7 Lo, <i>this is</i> the man <i>that</i> made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.</p> <p>8 But <i>I am</i> like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.</p> <p>9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done <i>it</i>: and I will wait on thy name; for <i>it is</i> good before thy saints.</p> |
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## LECTURE 887.

*The end of those who speak deceitfully and cruelly.*

How oftentimes in man is greatness disfigured by vain glory! How often do the great and vainglorious boast of that, which ought to be their shame, namely, the mischief which they do! How different is the character of God's great power, to be ever employed in doing good! His "goodness endureth continually." It is manifested in each blessing we enjoy every hour of our lives. It is manifested in our being alive at all, in our having life wherein to enjoy his blessings; in our being spared notwithstanding the sins we have committed, spared to repent and to amend. It is manifest in God's pardoning the penitent. It is manifest in his bearing with the wicked for a space, if so be that by any means they may be induced to repent.

But see the lengths to which men go in wickedness. See the degree to which they abuse the long suffering and goodness of the Lord. They let the tongue devise mischiefs, "like a sharp razor, working deceitfully." They love "evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness." David had experienced this in the case of Doeg. And our blessed Lord met with the like treatment, oh how much more wicked when applied to Him, on the part of his enemies and persecutors! And we probably, if we have taken pains to serve God truly, have been exposed to the mischief of false and cruel tongues, delighting to misrepresent our conduct, to misconstrue our motives, and to inflict pain by words, more sharp than blows, aimed at our character, or destructive of our peace. That men should thus



speak, when they know that God hears all they say, proves the hardness of their hearts. That they even love to deceive, and to do harm with their lips, this shews them very far gone indeed in the depths of iniquity. But there can be no doubt that this is a common case. There is perhaps scarcely any sin more frequently committed than the utterance of unkind words, coloured with falsehood, and intended to do harm to those whom the speaker hates, envies, or is angry with, intended to do harm, and to give pain, and made the vent of every angry and revengeful feeling, when no other means of mischief is at hand.

Let then him whose tongue thus loves and utters all devouring words take warning, that like as he deals out destruction with his lips, so will God destroy him for ever, and take him away, and pluck him out of his dwelling place, and root him out of the land of the living. Let him know that a judgment is at hand, when men shall give account for every idle word they speak: a judgment, which even the righteous will not see without alarm; what therefore will be then the confusion of the wicked? The scorn with which they have treated others will then be heaped on their own heads. And they will be haunted as they lie down to die, and again as they rise up from the grave, with the sound of words like these: "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness." A dreadful character, as bad as any they can ever have ascribed falsely to those whom they reviled; and having truth for its strength and sting! A dreadful character to deserve whilst living, to bear when dead, to rise with, on arising from the dead to stand before the judgment seat of Christ! And dreadful to think that God Himself, and they that be godly, delighting as they do in words and works of mercy and compassion, will join at that day in the universal triumph over the fall of the cruel and the false!

"But I am like a green olive tree," David adds, speaking of that which he was by the grace of God, flourishing, and fruitful, and yielding good instead of evil to them that dwelt around him. "In the house of God;" that was the place in which he felt it good for him to grow, there he found nourishment unto life eternal. "I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." This will protect us from false and cruel men. This will save us from the falsehood and malice of our adversary the devil. Whatever deliverance we experience let us ascribe it to this the true source of all salvation; saying, "I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it." Whatever help we stand in need of, let us declare that we delight to depend on God for it: saying, "I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints;" it is edifying to them, as well as profitable to myself, and it redounds also to the praise of the goodness of God.

*David declareth the depravity of the natural man.*To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil. *A Psalm of David.*

- 1 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is* none that doeth good.
- 2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.
- 3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread: they have not called upon God.
- 5 There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.
- 6 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

## LECTURE 888.

*The sad case of the godless, and the joy of them that shall be saved.*

This psalm is nearly word for word the same as the fourteenth. How this comes to pass is not known with any certainty. It has however been conjectured, with great probability, that the psalm having been composed on one occasion, and entered on the records of David's inspired songs, was by him slightly altered, as we find it here, on another occasion; and again entered, as having been anew inspired, in the volume of the word of God. At all events, we may be sure from its occurring twice, that it contains matter worthy of our very serious attention. And we may be glad of the opportunity, afforded us afresh, of reflecting on the folly and unbelief, on the wickedness of the natural man, on the helplessness of those against whom God sets his face, and on the happiness of those to whom God imparts the joy of his salvation.

See then first the foolishness of unbelief: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." This foolish conclusion is flatly contradicted by every object which his eyes behold, by every faculty which his mind is conscious of. The world around him and the world within him, unite to testify that there is a God. The heavens above, the earth beneath, the land, the waters, and the air, the living things with which all elements are crowded, the abundance with which all their wants are supplied, the beauty of their forms, their strength, their instincts, and their wonderful gradations and connexions with each other, all echo the assurance, that there is a God. Much more man's own living soul, his reasonable faculties, his memory, his understanding, his imagination, his hope, his fear, his pleasure, his pain, his aptness to worship, and the very strength of the overweening understanding in

which he suppresses this natural propensity, and dares to deny his Maker, all prove, in contradiction to his daring imagination, that there is, there must be, a God.

But what will not wickedness dare? To what madness of folly will not sinful man resort, to justify any course of sin on which he is fully bent? Let him but once resolve on indulging in iniquity, and he will soon find some plausible excuse for his transgression. And if he cannot otherwise silence the remonstrances of his conscience against transgressing the commandments of God, he will persuade himself and say in his heart, yes, and he will persuade others also if he can, that "there is no God." See the tendency of indulging our evil passions! See the difficulty of checking them, if once we allow them to have the mastery! See the gross foolishness, and mad profaneness, to which we might soon be brought, if we prefer to become wilful workers of iniquity.

And let us further observe the helplessness and fearfulness, the sinking of spirits and trembling of heart, to which they who thus transgress are exposed, according to the just judgments of the Lord. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." A common case with those who will not be afraid where there is just ground for apprehension. Let us fear God; and we have then nothing else to be afraid of. And by degrees we love Him more, and fear Him less, until "perfect love casteth out fear." 1 John 4. 18. But if a man have neither the love of God in his heart, nor the fear of God before his eyes, he is usually the prey of some vain terror, which he is ashamed to own even to himself. The irreligious are commonly superstitious. They are hopeless, and they feel themselves to be helpless, with regard to the world of spirits. And having devoted themselves entirely to this present world, and made unto themselves only worldly friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, they shrink from the hour when they must become acquainted, whether they will or no, with the inhabitants of a world which is eternal.

But oh the joy of those who believe in God, and love Him, oh their joy in that moment, when the eyes are closed to earthly objects, and the soul awakens to eternal happiness! Salvation! much as we now enjoy of it, we shall not till then know how great a gift it is. Delivered we now find ourselves, marvellously delivered from the power of sin, and from the burden of the guilt of it. But then, to be with Christ, to see God as He is, to be past all danger, to be sure of all glory, to begin to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; oh when we try to think of the ecstasy then awaiting us, we can but long earnestly, and give thanks devoutly, and pray with renewed ardour unto God, "Thy kingdom come." Matt. 6. 10.



*David prayeth, and praiseth God, for deliverance.*

To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A psalm* of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

1 Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.	5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.
2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.	6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good.
3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.	7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen <i>his desire</i> upon mine enemies.
4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that up-	

## LECTURE 889.

*The triumph of good over evil.*

According to the title this psalm refers to the signal escape of David from the pursuit of Saul, at the time when he had taken refuge in the neighbourhood of Ziph, and when the people of that place had informed Saul of the spot to which he had retired. See 1 Sam. 23. 19—29. We see then here what thoughts and words become us on any emergency of great danger, and also when the danger is over, and we have been enabled to escape. First David prays for help and deliverance. He begs God to save him, and also to judge him, or redress his wrongs. "Save me, O God, by thy name;" that is to say, by reason of my calling on Thee, the only true God. And thus it is written in the Book of Proverbs: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Prov. 18. 10. "And judge me by thy strength." God is almighty. If, therefore, his strength be with us we cannot but prevail. What heavenly peace and comfort does this single thought impart; if we have but ground for thinking that God is on our side in any contest which it may be our duty to engage in!

And more especially we may hope to escape the malice of our enemies, if, like those of David, "they have not set God before them." This is a fit topic of supplication unto God, when we are praying for his help under any oppression or persecution which evil disposed men have brought upon us. Only we must beware of judging uncharitably. We must watch against the temptation, very apt to beset those who believe in God and love Him, the temptation to be proud of their piety, and ready to censure and condemn those whom they suppose to be less faithful and devout. But provided we watch against this danger, there are many cases in which we may enjoy with profit the comfort of

thinking that God is our Helper, and that He cannot be the Helper of those who are opposed to us. If, for instance, they are opposed to us simply by reason of our renouncing some unquestionable sin, which they notoriously indulge in; or because we have quitted evil company in consequence of renouncing evil practices; if, on grounds like these, men revile, or scorn, or injure us, if by reason of our faithfully discharging any manifest duty towards God we incur the displeasure of those who are undeniably at enmity with Him, then it is our privilege to feel assured, that however greatly they may be permitted to triumph over us for a time, yet He who is omnipotent is on our side, and will be sure to give us the victory in the end.

David felt assured that he should conquer and prevail, through the help of God, in this present life. According to the tenour of God's promises in the Law, he was certain that God would reward evil unto his enemies; and he appealed to God to cut them off according to his truth. And he has expressed in one and the same psalm his prayer for success, his confident trust that he should succeed, and his joyful thanks for having succeeded. He saw his enemies retire, when he had all but fallen into their hands. And he declared accordingly, "I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies." We have no warrant to look, with any such certain hope, for the like speedy retribution in the world that now is. It may or it may not take place. But we have warrant for believing that the time is short, and that the day is at hand; the day in which those who are now persecuted for righteousness' sake will be everlastingly blessed. A great contest between good and evil is perpetually going on. More properly speaking, it is a great triumph of good over evil. But in our short sighted apprehension, the trifling and transitory successes of evil, which God allows for his own good purposes, seem of much more consequence than they really are, and they are apt to try our faith and patience, apt to tempt us to doubt or to despair. Let us know then, that as surely as David saw his desire upon his enemies, so surely will every thing that is evil in the world be subdued under that which is good. Nay rather it is now passing under the yoke. The work of victory is going on. The battle, as far as there could be any battle where one party is almighty, the battle was won when Christ died on the cross. And thenceforth He reigns supreme, until all enemies shall have been put under his feet. The kingdom is already his. And if we be his by faith, the kingdom even now is ours. We reign with Christ, however harshly men may lord it over us. We reign with Christ in peace and joy which no man can take from us. We look to reign with Him ere long in glory, with which none can even try to interfere.

*David setteth forth before God his grief and his desire.*To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm of David.*

- 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.
- 2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;
- 3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.
- 4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
- 5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.
- 6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest.
- 7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off, *and* remain in the wilderness. Selah.
- 8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest.
- 9 Destroy, O LORD, *and* divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.
- 10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.
- 11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.
- 12 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it*: neither *was* it he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me; then I would have hid myself from him:
- 13 But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.
- 14 We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company.
- 15 Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.

## LECTURE 890.

*Abhorrence of treachery and hypocrisy.*

The title states that this is "a Psalm of David." And it is easy to conjecture that it was written on the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and more especially that it refers to the treachery of Ahithophel. In the history we are informed that "one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. 2 Sam. 15. 31. This short prayer appears to be expanded in the psalm before us. And we may consider that we have here set forth the distress of mind under which David was labouring, as well as his supplication unto God against those who had dealt very treacherously with him. And in this point of view the Psalms would often largely help us in understanding the history of David; who is made known to us in the books of Samuel rather as a successful warrior than as a devoted saint. In these sacred songs we see the workings of his mind within. And when we consider that he spake as he was



moved by the Holy Spirit of God, we are so much the more inclined to watch the workings of his mind, expressed in this affecting way, and designed, with such change as fits the altered circumstances of the case, to be a pattern for our thoughts and feelings.

Here then let us learn how graciously we are allowed to pour out before God all our griefs, and to make known unto Him all our requests. True He knows beforehand all that we can have to say. Yet is it a comfort to us that we may say it unto Him. It soothes our spirits to tell Him of our troubles. And according to his ordinance, our way to obtain that which we desire, is to set before Him our wants. Thus David begs of God to give ear, to hide not Himself, to attend, to hear him. And with the earnestness of a true suppliant, he speaks of his prayer, his supplication, his mourning, and the noise of his lamentation. He mentions the causes of his trouble, the voice of his enemy, the oppression of the wicked, their slandering him and threatening him, their plotting his ruin, and taxing him with iniquity, and their hating him with great wrath. He states his own depressed condition, how sore pained was his heart, how close to him were the terrors of death, and to what a degree of fearfulness, trembling, and horror, his reverses and afflictions had brought him. And he mentions the secret wish of his heart that he could escape from all this trouble as easily as a dove could fly into the wilderness. He then turns his thoughts towards his enemies, and to the mischief which he perceived that they were doing in Jerusalem. He prays God to put an end to it by bringing them to destruction; seeing that they were wicked and deceitful. He dwells on the gross deceitfulness of one of them in particular, who had been his own counsellor and friend. And having pointed out how much this circumstance added to his distress, he repeats his prayer that they might all be destroyed by God; repeating his reason also, "for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them."

Now our own sense plainly tells us, that this prayer of David for the destruction of his enemies might be fit for him to use, if he were directed by God's Spirit to use it, as declaratory of God's righteous sentence against the wicked; it might be well in the mouth of God's prophet; and yet have no place in ours. And accordingly it is set before us in God's word, with no warning at the same time given against our using the like petitions, and with nothing added, as if nothing were needed, to remind us, that God is here teaching us by the mouth of David how greatly He abhors deceit and guile. Let us therefore apply these imprecations to this their obvious use. Let them fill our minds with abhorrence of hypocrisy and treachery. And considering that David was a type of Christ, let us especially here learn to abhor the guilt of being in any sense traitors to our Saviour, or hypocrites in the sight of God.

*David taketh comfort in prayer and confidence.*

- 16 As for me, I will call upon him : he hath broken his covenant.  
 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud : and he shall hear my voice.  
 18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me : for there were many with me.  
 19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.  
 20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with
- him : he hath broken his covenant.  
 21 *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but *was* in his heart : his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.  
 22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.  
 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction : bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days ; but I will trust in thee.

## LECTURE 891.

*Our way to attain to trusting in God.*

Neither the being inspired as a prophet, nor the being faithful and devout as a man, could prevent David from going through those vicissitudes of feeling, which are common to men of ardent minds ; and to which we must all be in some degree liable as long as we are here in the flesh. Nor has it seemed amiss to the great Author of all Scripture, that these inconsistencies of character should be recorded in his book, even in the case of those who are set before us as patterns ; it being obviously easy for our sense to discern in what we ought to imitate their conduct, and in what we ought not. Thus in the sacred song before us, the psalmist tells us, that under the pressure of his troubles he had said, “ Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I flee away and be at rest. Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.” Ver. 6, 7. A natural imagination, that it would be better for us to be in some other circumstances, than in those in which God has placed us ! A natural wish, that our lot were other than it is ; but a wish that implies doubt as to God’s knowing what is best for us, and delighting to make all things work together for our good ! How much better then to say, as David says soon afterwards, “ As for me, I will call upon God ; and the Lord shall save me ;” and again, “ Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud : and he shall hear my voice ;” and again, “ Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved !”

And in cherishing this confidence of hope, and forming this firm resolution to abide where he was, and do his duty in the state of life to which God had called him, it is to be observed

that the psalmist was not influenced by any change in his outward circumstances. He called indeed to mind how God had in times past delivered his soul in peace from the battle that was against him. And this recollection encouraged him to trust, that in like manner "he that abideth of old" would hear his prayer and defeat his adversaries. But up to the present time they had met with no reverses. "Because they have no changes," says he, "therefore they fear not God." Their continued prosperity helped to harden them in sin; and David was so much the more persuaded that God would "bring them down into the pit of destruction." They persisted in their breach of covenant. They repented not of their plausible speeches, used for the concealment of treasonable designs. And David felt so much the more sure, that such "bloody and deceitful men," as they were, would not "live out half their days."

"But I will trust in thee." This is his conclusion, whilst his danger still is imminent as before. "I will trust in thee," this is his resolution, when there were the same circumstances as before to make him dissatisfied where he was, and tempt him to wish for a change that was impossible. "I will trust in thee," this is the calm expression of holy confidence, wrought in him, through God's blessing, by the means of meditation and devotion. He had committed his cause to God in prayer. He had prayed earnestly. He had resolved that he would pray frequently, regularly, and fervently. He had been enabled to believe, that God would hear his prayer. He had called to mind how greatly God had helped him aforetime. He had reflected that the guile, and malice, and hardened wickedness of his enemies, instead of being grounds of alarm, and reasons for his indulging in vain wishes, were signs of their being devoted to destruction, and therefore reasons for him to be contented where he was, contented, and also confident in God. "I will trust in thee." Let this be our resolve also whatsoever difficulties beset our path; whatsoever friends betray us, whatsoever enemies trouble us, and threaten to destroy us. God has delivered us already, let us think of this. Let us think of Christ dying to deliver us. The enmity of wicked men, and the malice of evil spirits, cannot fail to be hateful unto God. Let us so much the more have good hope that He will prove our Friend. Glad as we might be to flee away and be at rest, let us reflect that it is God's will we should be here, to work while it is called to day, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to fight the good fight of faith and hope and charity. And deeply as we may be at times dejected under the sense of our own frailty, let us lay our griefs before God in prayer, let us resolve with the psalmist to pray evening, and morning, and at noon; let us pray with faith for God's help, and meditate with piety on God's goodness; and He will give us grace to say to Him, with confidence and cheerfulness and joyfulness, "I will trust in thee."



*David prayeth for mercy by reason of his enemies.*

To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

- 1 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.
- 2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou most high.
- 3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.
- 4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.
- 5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.
- 6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.
- 7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.
- 8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in thy book?
- 9 When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God *is* for me.
- 10 In God will I praise *his* word: in the LORD will I praise *his* word.
- 11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
- 12 Thy vows *are* upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.
- 13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt* not *thou* deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

## LECTURE 892.

*Our sense of danger leading to a good hope of safety.*

With what a variety of expressions do the psalms put before us the same constantly recurring topics, the malice of our enemies, and the tender mercy of our God! And how numerous are the occasions, in the life of every one of us, in which we need to have recourse to God's merciful assistance, to deliver us from them that would swallow us up! The enmity of man is only one of the many means used by Satan, to drive us from the steadfastness of our trust in God. The friendship of the world, its applause, its honours, its riches, its seductive pleasures, these too lie in wait for our souls. Our own corrupted lusts, also fight within us fiercely, and fight against us fearfully. Not a day can pass without some new attack being made on us from one quarter or another. And many as are the cases of trial and trouble set before us in the psalms, they will soon be outnumbered in the experience of any one, who watches his own spiritual conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But which of us is duly sensible of these dangers of the soul? Who feels them as keenly as he feels the perils of the body, or the risks of losing health, wealth, friends, or reputation in the world? From whose lips does God almighty hear the earnest plea for mercy, offered up as frequently and as fervently, in re-

ference to the malice of spiritual foes, as these petitions of David for the safety of his life? There is little doubt that it is of his life he speaks in the first instance, where our translators have used the word soul, saying of his enemies, "They mark my steps, when they wait for my soul;" and again saying to God, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death." But we may do well to apply the words he uses to our life eternal in the heavens. At his lively expressions of alarm, we may kindle in ourselves a more quick apprehension of the jeopardy we are in, lest we lose the crown of glory prepared for them that abide faithful to the end.

It cannot ever be well for us to be off our guard. It cannot be safe for us ever to forget, that there is constantly lurking nigh to us one, who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. It must be good for us to be aware, that "he fighting daily oppreseth" us. It must conduce to our safety to be under the impression, that our "enemies would daily swallow us up." Our fear will prove salutary if it leads us to resolve, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee;" and if by this means we are brought to such confidence in God, as to have good ground for saying further, "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me," no, nor what evil spirit can do either. Men may misrepresent us, and legions of Satan's angels may gather themselves together to ensnare us; but stronger is He that is with us than they that are against us. God can and will cast them down. And we are encouraged to think, that He will not forget our present work, and labour of love; we are warranted to pray, that He will put our tears into his bottle, and record them in his book; that is to say, that He will preserve the memory of that which we suffer here in resisting the devil, renouncing the world, and mortifying the flesh; or, in other words, that if we suffer here with Christ, we shall be also glorified together. See Rom. 8. 17.

If indeed we repine at suffering, if we are so much as surprised at being called upon to suffer, either we must have forgotten that we are Christ's disciples, or we must have failed to bear in mind how much Christ suffered for us. The sense of our constant exposure to danger, and the alarm and grief which we ought consequently to feel, must not merely render us sorrowful, without at the same time inclining us to rejoice. These things, whilst they lead us to trust in God, must also lead us to thank Him, and to say, "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word." Without Him we cannot resist our enemies. Without Him we cannot praise Himself. With Him, and with the sense of his vows upon our souls, of the vows by which we are bound to Him, and of the covenant which He has graciously vouchsafed to enter into with us, we may confidently trust, that as He has by the death of Christ redeemed us from dying everlastingly, so He will also by the gift of the Holy Ghost enable us to walk before Him in the light of everlasting life.

*David declareth his trust in God, and magnifieth Him.*

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

- 1 Be merciful unto me, O God, *be* above all the earth.  
 be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.
- 2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *all things* for me.
- 3 He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
- 4 My soul *is* among lions: and I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.
- 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.
- 6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.
- 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.
- 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: *I myself* will awake early.
- 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.
- 10 For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.
- 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

## LECTURE 893.

*The praise of God for his great goodness and glory.*

Whatsoever else we have to ask for at God's hand, our chief plea must still be for mercy; and we must still pray with David, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me." Oh that we may be always able to add with truth this reasonable plea: "for my soul trusteth in thee!" Oh that we may both make and keep this wise resolution: "yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast!" This is the efficacious way to plead with God; we must urge not the worth of our obedience, but the devout reliance of our faith, a faith that makes no merit of itself, but relies on the merits, the only merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must "cry unto God most high," with trust that He is able and willing to save, that He can do and will do, all things for us. We must cry unto Him for mercy; owning, in the very tenour of our prayers, that we dare not abide his justice. We must take refuge under the shadow of his wings; admitting, by thus resorting to his fatherly protection, that we have no power of ourselves to defend ourselves.

David here describes the imminent jeopardy of his life in terms which may readily remind us of Daniel in the den of lions, and of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego cast into the furnace of fire. But the weapons from which he appears to have suffered most of pain were the false and cruel speeches of his enemies: "whose



teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." There is one who is described in the book of Revelation, as "the accuser of our brethren," "which accused them before our God day and night." Rev. 12. 10. Let us trust that God will send forth for our defence, against this deadly enemy, the two great helps here spoken of, "his mercy and his truth." Let us pray to Him, and plead before Him, for this end, his own glory, that it may be magnified in the salvation of his people. "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth." Be Thou proved by our deliverance, as Thou art by many much more weighty signs, but be Thou proved by this also, to be the Lord of heaven and earth, the Preserver of men, the sovereign Ruler over death and Satan.

Our prayer is heard. Our request has long ago been granted. They that digged a pit for our souls, are fallen into the midst of it themselves. They that compassed our Saviour's death, forwarded the salvation of the world. They that now tempt us to disobedience and destruction, minister to the exercise of our faith and patience, and to their own discomfiture and shame. Yes, thanks be to God for his grace whereby we stand, for his great love whereby we have been redeemed; thanks be to God, our prayer is heard, our request has long ago been granted. Our salvation has been wrought for us. And even now, if we fail not by our own fault, and fall short of that salvation which is wrought in our behalf, we are saved. Thanks be to God for it. Praised be his name for his unspeakable gift. Our hearts are fixed, O Lord, our hearts are fixed; we will sing and give praise. We will praise Thee with thankfulness in our hearts. We will express our thanks by praising Thee with our lips.

"Awake up, my glory;" thus did David stir up within himself the best powers of his mind, the best affections of his soul. "Awake, psaltery and harp:" thus did he call to his aid the best instruments of art, to help him in his song of praise. "I myself will awake early;" thus did he resolve to lose no time in praising God, and to remit no watchfulness. "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations." Thus would he make the sound of God's praise to be heard far and wide in all the earth. For not to the earth only do the mercy and the truth of God extend. They reach beyond the clouds unto the heavens, and unto the heaven of heavens. There they are manifested no less than here. There the spirits of just men made perfect join with an innumerable company of angels, to say how true and just God is in all his ways, and yet how merciful and kind. And precious is the privilege of saints on earth to unite with them that are on earth no longer, in saying to their God and ours: "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth."

*David declareth the end of them that judge wickedly.*

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

1 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: *they are* like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;

5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions,

O LORD.

7 Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually: *when* he bendeth *his bow* to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

8 As a snail *which* melteth, let every one of them pass away: *like* the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

## LECTURE 894.

*The end of the ungodly a proof of God's justice.*

It has been thought, with some probability, that David at the commencement of this psalm refers to some unjust sentence which had been passed against him, by the congregation, or council of the elders of Israel, at the instance of his persecutor Saul. Whether this be so or not, it is evident that he denounces the sin of unjust judgment; and that he denounces it with the authority of a prophet of the Lord. Let all then who are set in any office of authority, which empowers them to judge amongst their brethren, give heed to these warning words. Let all who have any authority whatsoever committed to their hands by God, any superiority or rule amongst men, be aware that for this talent they must give account to God. Let them know, that the more surely it has been entrusted to their charge by Him who is the fountain of all power, so much the greater is their guilt, if they abuse it to the purposes of their own self will, to gratify their pride, or passion, at the expense of those who are set under them.

The greater the blessing, so much the worse is usually the abuse of it. The magistrate is God's ordinance for good. And when we consider in what danger not only our property but our lives would be, in default of the administration of wholesome laws, when we remember how much the settled order of the state promotes the happiness of our homes, and our peaceable enjoyment

of the ordinances of the church, we shall be agreed, that we cannot rate too highly the blessing of having just and equal laws administered uprightly and equitably. But then what can be worse on the other hand than the abuses of this blessing? What can be more galling than the oppression of an absolute tyrant, or the wayward fury of a lawless multitude? What can be more hurtful to man, or more offensive in the sight of God, than for the law to be made use of as a cloak of robbery and wrong, and for its solemn sentence to be pronounced in favour of violence or oppression? No wonder that the psalmist when denouncing acts like these, is led to reflect on the wickedness of the heart of man, and to express in strong terms the dreadful extent to which it reaches, and the terrible punishment which is sure to overtake it in the end.

"The wicked are estranged from the womb;" they are born children of wrath, and they grow up in habits of iniquity. "They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies;" falsehood being usually one of the first proofs that children give of the corruption of their nature. "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent;" one of the most fearful and loathsome of all the mischiefs to which our fallen nature is exposed, an apt emblem of the malignity of wicked men, or of the malice of the devil. And in refusing to take good counsel, or to adopt good principles, in obstinately refusing to hear when God calls them by his word and ministers, "they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." They will not be persuaded to do no harm. They are resolved not to lay aside their venom. Neither the terrors of the Lord, nor the glad tidings of his love avail to bring them to a better mind, so that they might cease to do evil, and learn to do good.

Let them however at least hear their sentence here pronounced beforehand, if by any means, whilst there yet is time, they may be prevailed on to repent. Their means of doing harm taken from them, their power of hurting man or offending God cut off, they themselves will either be made to waste away gradually, or will be destroyed suddenly. Let the wicked lay to heart these threatenings of the Lord. And let the righteous be aware, that though for the present they mourn over the transgressors, and pray for them, and persevere in trying to convert them, yet a day is coming, when it will be their duty to rejoice in the righteous sentence of a most merciful but just Judge. A day is coming, and it is a day that will never end, when the misery of them that are ungodly, as well as the happiness of the faithful and obedient, will redound to the glory of the goodness of the Lord; and when all shall see and say, that which we have already ample ground for saying, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."



*David prayeth to be delivered from his cruel enemies.*

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David ; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

- 1 Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God : defend me from them that rise up against me.
- 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.
- 3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul : the mighty are gathered against me ; not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
- 4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault : awake to help me, and behold.
- 5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen : be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.
- 6 They return at evening : they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.
- 7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth : swords *are* in their lips : for who, *say they*, doth hear ?
- 8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them ; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.
- 9 *Because of* his strength will I wait upon thee : for God *is* my defence.
- 10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me : God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.
- 11 Slay them not, lest my people forget : scatter them by thy power ; and bring them down, O LORD our shield.
- 12 *For* the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride : and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.
- 13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not be : and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.
- 14 And at evening let them return ; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.
- 15 Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.
- 16 But I will sing of thy power ; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning : for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.
- 17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing : for God *is* my defence, and the God of my mercy.

## LECTURE 895.

*The Jews in their dispersion a monument of wrath.*

The title ascribes this psalm to David. But as the titles of the psalms have not the authority of Scripture, it may be questioned whether they have not sometimes been misapplied. And there seems to be little or no reference in this psalm to the event of David's life mentioned in the title, namely, "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." It has therefore been conjectured, with no small probability, that the psalm was composed in the times of Nehemiah ; and that it refers to the attempts

made by his heathen neighbours to prevent him from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. His life was, we know, several times endangered by their plots. He was opposed by them with great activity, and mocked with no small scorn. He overcame them by means of watchfulness, and prayer, and by putting his trust in the Lord. These things agree well with many of the expressions in the psalm before us. But to whomsoever these expressions refer in the first instance, we may observe with profit how exactly they apply to the treatment which our blessed Lord experienced, and to the vengeance which He has already seen fit to inflict on his unrelenting enemies.

Against Christ were the mighty gathered; for the life of Christ they lay in wait; and that, for no transgression or sin of his. He in his human nature prayed very earnestly. He deeply felt the cruel words with which both Jews and Gentiles aggravated the sufferings of his life, and the agonies of his death. He, in his character of Lord and King, took signal vengeance on those wicked children of Abraham; who for rejecting their Messiah when He came unto his own, were more fit to be accounted for heathen than for Jews. "Slay them not, lest my people forget: Scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield." Here we seem to have a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the dispersion of the Jews. And again, "Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied." A fearful sentence; and fearfully has it been fulfilled in the lot of those who were guilty of the death of Christ; and who dared to take all the guilt upon themselves, saying, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Matt. 27. 25. The end of their dispersion, if we are right in supposing that their dispersion is here foretold, the end and object of it is, that the people of Christ may never forget the vengeance, which was meet to be inflicted on these his hardened enemies. Let us think of this, whenever it happens to us to meet with any one of this most singularly afflicted race. They are a living monument of the just judgments of a holy God. They are an unanswerable proof, that all merciful as our Saviour is, and full of compassion and of long suffering, yet it is consistent with this his character of love, to consume his apostate people in his wrath, yea, and to preserve them for a perpetual destruction.

*David lamenteth failure, triumpheth in success.*

To the chief musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-sobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

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|---|---|
| <p>1 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.</p> <p>2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.</p> <p>3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.</p> <p>4 Thou hast given a banner to them that feared thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.</p> <p>5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save <i>with</i> thy right hand, and hear me.</p> <p>6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the val-</p> | <p>ley of Succoth.</p> <p>7 Gilead <i>is</i> mine, and Manasseh <i>is</i> mine; Ephraim also <i>is</i> the strength of mine head; Judah <i>is</i> my lawgiver;</p> <p>8 Moab <i>is</i> my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou became of me.</p> <p>9 Who will bring me <i>into</i> the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?</p> <p>10 <i>Wilt</i> not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?</p> <p>11 Give us help from trouble: for vain <i>is</i> the help of man.</p> <p>12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he <i>it is that</i> shall tread down our enemies.</p> |
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## LECTURE 896.

*Our way to prosper in the propagation of the Gospel.*

The triumphs of David in the promised land may be understood by us, as signifying beforehand the triumphs of Him, who was David's Son, in the supremacy of his Gospel throughout all the world. But for a triumphant psalm, how strange is the note of sadness it begins with: "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased: O turn thyself to us again!" And how justly may we apply these words, to the little progress which the Gospel has been making among men, for these many centuries past! How far do we fall short of having carried out these glad tidings into all lands! How few of the kingdoms of the world have become as yet the kingdoms of Christ! How great has been the hinderance to this good work, arising from the corruptions and divisions of the church! How truly may we say to God, concerning these grievous scandals and confusions, "Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it!" how suitably may we pray, "Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh!" How justly may we lament, on comparing the extent of God's promises, with the progress yet made in evangelizing mankind, how justly may we lament unto God,



with acknowledgment that the fault is all our own, "Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment!"

Such are the first melancholy notes in this sacred song of triumph. But it is in accordance with God's dealings in the Gospel of his Son, to turn our mourning into joy. And the strain before us quickly changes, from words which suit our past ill successes, to that more extensive and rapid progress which we trust the Gospel is now once more making in the world. The banner which God has given we may explain by the prophecy of Isaiah, "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious;" Isai. 11. 10; the rest or repose of Him, who is at once the Banner and the Conqueror. God's word is pledged to his Son's great success. And we, trusting in that word, may go forth to the good work with a strong courage, and with a lively hope. In faith we may rejoice to partition out the world into territories of Christ and of his church. In faith we may contemplate each quarter of the globe subdued by conviction of the truth, every isle, and each great continent, and all their various inhabitants, casting off the abominations of idolatry, or the fables of Mahometan superstition, and gladly acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ to be at once their Saviour and their King. Oh happy day! Oh soon may it begin to shew itself! the day when all the nations of the earth shall be united, as one man, to hail the great Immanuel's name, and to worship God through Christ!

But who will bring us into the strong city? By whose help are we to look for this glorious success? "Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?" Perhaps we have too much lost sight in this matter of our sole dependance upon Thee. Perhaps the signal for our more large success, in making the Gospel known and loved, will be our greater readiness to say with David unto Thee, "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man." Let us think less of the efficacy of the means, and look more to the mighty working of the Spirit. Let us attach less importance to the extent of our gifts, and more to the fervency of our prayers. Let us give indeed, and exert ourselves much more largely; but let us dwell much less on the fruit of our exertions; let us more heartily ascribe all the work and all the glory unto Him, whose undoubtedly it all is. And looking to the power of his grace, in the hearts of his creatures, to soften their hostility to the Gospel, let us express at once our plan for succeeding and our assurance of success, saying, "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."

*David pleadeth with God on the strength of mercies received.*

*To the chief musician upon Neginab, A Psalm of David.*

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Hear my cry, O God; at-                 | my vows: thou hast given me          |
| tend unto my prayer.                      | the heritage of those that fear      |
| 2 From the end of the earth               | thy name.                            |
| will I cry unto thee, when my             | 6 Thou wilt prolong the king's       |
| heart is overwhelmed: lead me             | life: and his years as many ge-      |
| to the rock <i>that</i> is higher than I. | nerations.                           |
| 3 For thou hast been a shelter            | 7 He shall abide before God          |
| for me, and a strong tower from           | for ever: O prepare mercy            |
| the enemy.                                | and truth, <i>which</i> may preserve |
| 4 I will abide in thy tabernacle          | him.                                 |
| for ever: I will trust in the             | 8 So will I sing praise unto         |
| covert of thy wings. Selah.               | thy name for ever, that I may        |
| 5 For thou, O God, hast heard             | daily perform my vows.               |

#### LECTURE 897.

*Of God's giving us grace to persevere unto the end.*

How seldom are our prayers to God uttered with any such fervour as is signified by these words of David, "Hear my cry!" Whether our lips speak aloud, or only gently whisper, in our prayers, let our hearts cry earnestly unto God, when we apply unto Him for help and safety. And what can be a more desolate situation, or one in which the need of God's guidance and protection would be felt more deeply, than that which is suggested by the following expression, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed!" David perhaps meant to speak only of the extremity of Judæa, to which he had been driven by the violence of his enemies, or to which he apprehended that he might be driven. But his words have been realized by many a lone traveller in distant wilds, by them that have explored burning deserts, or have navigated frozen seas; who have left it on record, that from the ends of the earth they have cried unto God, and have been heard, and that when they have felt themselves most remote from kindred and from country, farthest off from the abode of human beings, and almost beyond the dwelling place or haunts of any living creature whatsoever, they have still been able to find themselves nigh to God. Be Thou, O God, nigh also, we beseech Thee, to such as yet feel themselves far off from Thee. When their heart is overwhelmed with a sense of desolation, in the thought that Thou hidest thy face from them, lead them out of themselves unto their Saviour, set them up and establish them on a Rock that is higher than they are, even on Christ the Rock of their salvation.

In furtherance of his prayer the psalmist proceeds to say to the most High: "thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy." We often find this topic insisted on in the Psalms, namely, mercies already received, as a plea in interceding for further favours. As for instance in this psalm we read soon afterwards: "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou

hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name." God had been a shelter to David, had been a strong tower to him, had heard his vows, had given him a heritage such as He gave to them that feared his name. And these things David pleads as reasons urgent with God, and likely to prevail on the most High to hear his cry, and to attend unto his prayer. For it is according to the experience of human nature, that he who has already conferred a benefit on another, takes interest in the person benefited, and is so much the more likely to help him further. Thus the life of the believer is felt to be a perpetual succession of benefits received; each the proof of love on the part of the almighty Giver, each the pledge of continued affection, each meet to be the plea for increase of gifts and mercies. And whilst the servant of mammon, if he ever receive the scanty pittance of his hard earned wages, finds himself bound down thereby to so much the sorer bondage, the child of God for his part, supplied by the bounty of a gracious Father with plenty undeserved, is privileged to plead graces received as arguments for bounty more enlarged, and is encouraged to think, that He may say to God in prayer, without encroaching on his goodness, Because Thou hast helped me hitherto, help me still; because Thou hast brought me thus far forward in the path of holiness towards the gate of heaven, therefore extend thy help yet further, until Thou hast perfected thy gracious work, and hast taken me to be, beyond all risk of falling, thine for evermore!

It appears from the conclusion of this psalm, that David enjoyed a confident persuasion, that he should be enabled to persevere unto the end, in the true faith of God's holy name, and in the enjoyment of God's manifold blessings, and in singing the praises of God's great glory. And though his words do also well apply to the eternal reign of the great King of saints, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we may profitably understand them, of those whom He has made "kings and priests unto God and his Father;" Rev. 1. 6; we may profitably take them to signify our own abiding before God faithful unto the end, our praising Him continually as long as we sojourn here, and after our departure hence joining in the celebration of his praise for ever. Such are the vows we have upon us. Such is our Christian calling and profession; such the employment of time and of eternity to which we stand pledged unto our Lord. And God will enable us to make it good. And it is our delight to be persuaded, that He will enable us. We trust He will, because we find He has. Our experience of his grace moving us effectually to glorify his name, this persuades us to think, and emboldens us to say, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8. 38, 39.



*David adviseth to trust in God and not in man.*

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

1 Truly my soul waiteth upon my glory: the rock of my God: from him *cometh* my salvation, strength, and my refuge, is in God.

2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. 8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be*, and as a tottering fence. 9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, and men of high degree *are* a lie: to be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.

4 They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. 10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart *upon them*.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him. 11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power *belongeth* unto God.

6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence; I shall not be moved. 12 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

7 In God *is* my salvation and his work.

## LECTURE 898.

*The difference between trusting in man and in God.*

Most men put their trust more or less in something outward or beyond themselves. They lean for help on one another. Or they depend upon the wealth which they possess, and which is in truth a leaning on the help of man, because man's help may be purchased by money. Now it certainly is the will of God that we should all be, to a great degree, dependent on each other. And we are nowhere in God's word encouraged to cast off all the benefits of mutual assistance, or the comfort of believing that our brethren are willing to assist us. Neither are we forbidden to possess riches, and to employ them in engaging one another's services, and so adding greatly to the amount of things needful or serviceable which we could obtain by our own exertions. But whilst all this is allowable, we are at the same time forbidden to set our hearts on these things; we are forbidden to put our trust in them. We are taught, that instead of suffering our confidence to repose on any such means as these, we ought to look up beyond them unto God, and to put our trust in Him, as our neverfailing Friend, our inestimable Wealth, our Rock, and our Salvation.

As to trusting in men, we are here warned by David, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie:

to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." Now we must not suppose that all men are here pronounced to be unfaithful. Far from it. There are men in all ranks of life capable of forming a sincere friendship, and of entertaining a kind and constant regard for their friends. But if we put our trust in them instead of trusting in God, then, whether we lean upon the great, we shall be taught our folly by finding them apt to deceive our expectations, or whether we court the favour of the multitude, we shall experience in their fickleness and foolishness the vanity of trusting in our fellow creatures. And as to trusting in riches, even if they increase lawfully, we must not set our hearts upon them, much less must we think to gain any advantage to ourselves by practising oppression or robbery, in order to increase our store. Wealth ill gotten is a curse to its owner. And then only can riches be a blessing, when having been obtained lawfully, they are not trusted in, but are regarded as the gift of Him, who alone is the Author of our safety, and are spent in such a manner as He will require of all those to whom He gives them.

And now let us observe the difference between trusting in such things as these, and trusting in God; and let us examine in which of the two we ourselves are apt to put our trust. Suppose that we are subject to the annoyance of some powerful enemies, who are scheming to do us grievous harm, and who spare neither force nor falsehood in the attempt to hurt us. In such a case do our thoughts recur continually to our friends on earth, and do we calculate only how far it seems likely that they will be able to defend us from harm? or do our souls wait upon God, with the firm persuasion that He is able and willing to deliver us, and to bring to nothing the designs of our adversaries? Or suppose that we are bent upon compassing some important object, for the advantage of ourselves, of our families, or of our neighbourhood? As we revolve the means whereby to execute our plan, or dwell in imagination on its accomplishment, is it to wealth, and wealth only, or to wealth chiefly, that we look? and do we find our minds always running on the amount of our resources? Or is it in God that we trust at all times, and do we pour out our hearts before Him in prayer for success, as the most effectual of all means towards succeeding? And in like manner, let us examine, which course do our reflections pursue, which way does our confidence lean, in sickness, in sorrow, in health, in joy, in youth, in age, in every thing; towards the help of man, or towards the help of God? towards them that are weak like ourselves, and liable to be deceitful and unkind, or towards Him of whom we know with certainty that both power and mercy belong to Him, and that He will never fail to succour those who put their trust in Him?

*David expresseth his thirst for God and a satisfaction in Him.*

A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1 O God, thou *art* my God; my bed, *and* meditate on thee early will I seek thee: my soul in the *night* watches.

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary. 7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips: 10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.

6 When I remember thee upon 11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

#### LECTURE 899.

*How we ought to long for God, and not to be satisfied without Him.*

It was "in the wilderness," according to the title of this psalm, that David was inspired to compose it. And it appears from the expressions at the commencement, that it was written when he was out of the reach of God's sanctuary, unable to partake of the services and sacrifices offered at the tabernacle of the Lord. This was the circumstance that made the wilderness appear to him as "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." And the thirst with which he longed for God, was a desire to see, as he expresses it, "to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." And what a singular expression of his desire is this, "my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee!" Here is the soul thirsting and the flesh longing, the soul craving for communion with God, with an ardour like unto thirst of the body, and the flesh quickened with a feeling like that of the soul, to long for and desire after the Lord. Oh that our desires for God's presence, and for the manifestation of his glory, whether in his sanctuary or out of it, may be worthy to be described in terms like these! Oh that, as the appetites of the body are apt, unless prevented by God's grace, to controul the feelings of the soul, so in us the devout feelings of the soul may, on the contrary, carry along with them all the energies of the body; and both body and soul, the whole man, and all his faculties, may entirely delight in communion with God!



It was Satan's suggestion, in the case of Job, "all that a man hath will he give for his life." Job 2. 4. But how differently does David argue: "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." Here is something which a devout man would not exchange for life. Without this, life would appear worse than death. With it, with the sense of it, with the persuasion that God loves us, that the great God actually loves us poor sinners as we are, with this persuasion animating our hearts, our life is a life of praise and thankfulness, we love Him who has first loved us, and we both ardently long to partake more largely of his goodness, and are abundantly satisfied with that which He already gives us. Happy inconsistency, and many such there are, a mystery to them that care for none of these things, but a mystery which is easily apprehended by the faithful soul! And happy they whose earliest waking thoughts, and latest midnight meditations, turn readily to their ever present God; under whose parental wings they one while take the sweet repose of peace and joy, and after Whom their souls are presently again hard following, with love which nothing short of heaven, and God's presence there in glory, can content! To the soul which thus seeks God, and thus enjoys his love, and rests upon his help, how light a thing it seems to have enemies among men seeking to take the life or goods which perish with the using! And how little need we regard even the infinitely more deadly enmity of those evil spirits, who aim at the destruction of the soul, how little need we regard their enmity, as long as we are thus penetrated with the love of God; if it were not that we fear, lest by reason of our frailty, they may rob us of this very grace itself, and may succeed, unless we watch carefully, and resist manfully, in lowering our estimate of God's great love for us, and in rendering our own affections towards Him less ardent and devout. But if they may by any possibility do this, far be it from us to be off our guard; far be it from us in such sort to despise them, as to take the less pains in resisting them! No; we will be aware of their power, activity, and malignity. We will bear in mind that they seek to rob us of no less than our everlasting delight in God. But at the same time we will go forth to meet them with a good courage, trusting not in ourselves but in Christ our King, glorying not in ourselves but in Him, and in that holy name of his, by which we have been called, into which we have been baptized, pledged by the most solemn of all vows, a holy sacrament, pledged to serve God faithfully, and assured that if we do so, He will defend us mightily. To Him be all the glory of our victory, and all the joy of our salvation; enough for us to receive from Him of that which is all his, and to be satisfied both now and hereafter out of his divine abundance!

*David describeth the malice of his enemies.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward *thought* of every one of *them*, and the heart, is deep.

2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: 7 But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.

3 Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: 8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. 9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

5 They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? 10 The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

6 They search out iniquities;

## LECTURE 900.

*Reflections on the great wickedness of the malicious.*

What a fearful account of the disposition and practices of his enemies does David here set before us! What a warning is here given to all of us not to harbour any such dispositions, not to be partakers of any such practices! They plotted against his life. Here was the guilt of murder, whether they succeeded in bloodshedding or not. Let us remember that we should incur that guilt, if we so much as harbour hatred in our hearts. See 1 John 3. 15. They held their consultation in secret. The works and words which shun the observation of mankind are usually most unfit for Him to witness who "seeth in secret." Matt. 6. 6. Let us therefore hold it a suspicious circumstance if ever we are invited to join in secret consultations or in measures which will not bear publicity. "Insurrection" too was one of the offences of these workers of iniquity; an offence usually plotted in secret, and always tending to violence and bloodshed, besides being a gross infringement of our duty to "the powers that be." Rom. 13. 1. Let us study as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men, and not only never to rise up against our rulers, but never to speak of them bitterly and rebelliously.

These sins of the tongue are here especially set down against David's enemies: "Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: that they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at

him, and fear not." This is an aggravating circumstance in the guilt of slanderous and malignant words, they are usually uttered behind the back of the person injured, and are therefore cowardly. And they who thus speak and vent their malice by speaking falsehoods of the righteous, are often men who would not dare to tell the truth before the face of any whom it would be likely to offend. And another aggravation of these sins of the tongue is, that sinners by their lying words uphold themselves in doing wrong, yea, and also stir up one another. "They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?" By reviling those whom they hate they persuade themselves that they are justified in their hatred. And by having imparted their evil counsels in secret to each other, they are strengthened in their evil purposes, and emboldened by each other's countenance to forget that they are seen by God. Thus "they search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search." An awful description of those, who instead of being drawn into sin against their will, actually seek to do all the evil that they can; a description which may well make us tremble, lest we, even in the most secret meditations of the heart, should ever be tempted to imagine harm against each other, and to plot how it may be best accomplished!

Probably one chief use of such descriptions as these in Scripture, is to shew us what evil is in our hearts by nature, what wickedness we might be brought to, if we were to indulge our own passions, and to listen to Satan tempting us, and to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Men there are now living in the midst of us, professing the very same religion as ourselves, who are not only capable of practices like these, but are actually and largely guilty of them. Who then is it that has made us to differ from such as these? This is another very profitable reflection to make on these awful descriptions of the wicked. Who has made us to differ from them? Who has taught us to love truth and mercy, even as they love falsehood and cruelty? Who gives us safety, when they are in hourly danger of being overtaken by divine vengeance? And when their end will be a terrible proof of the righteous judgments of God, who is it that will enable us to rejoice in the Lord, and to trust with confidence in Him? Who but God, working in us by his Spirit, having redeemed us by his Son? In whom then shall we glory but in Him? "All the upright in heart shall glory," not in themselves, but in the Lord. "They shall wisely consider of his doing." They shall consider that it is his doing. And whether they reflect on their own salvation accomplished by his grace, or on the destruction which will assuredly overtake his enemies, they are ready to say in every case, glory be to Thee, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!



*David praiseth God for his great power and goodness.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm and Song of David.

1 Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power:

7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

## LECTURE 901.

*The power and goodness of God in his providence and grace.*

However eloquent we find the language of the psalms, as translated in our bibles, it is still more full of grace and power in the original Hebrew. Thus in the margin we find that the beginning of this psalm, if literally translated, would run thus: "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Sion;" that is to say, Praise would but cannot find fit utterance for the emotions of the heart, on the contemplation of thy divine majesty. But we must do what we can. We must fulfil our vows by the best praise that is in our power. Thou hearest prayer. For this we would fain praise thy name. For this we would call on all men to draw nigh to Thee, and make their requests with joy. Thou forgivest iniquities, and dost purge away transgressions. For this we offer Thee our most fervent thanks; knowing as we do, that, but for this thy goodness, we should have been lost through sin for ever. To Thee be ascribed the blessedness of those, whose sin is forgiven, and their iniquity covered! To Thee be all the praise and glory for the peace and joy of those, who love Thee as Thou hast loved them, and who draw nigh unto Thee in faith and obedience, in prayer, and praise, and who dwell ever in

the light of thy countenance, and who are ever filled with the abundance of thy goodness !

And for which shall we first celebrate the glory of the Lord, for the wonders of his providence or for the marvels of his grace? And whether it be in the work of his creation or redemption, which shall we chiefly glorify, the majesty of his power, or the excellency of his love? Behold as to his great might, it is He who has set the mountains in their place, and has girt them round that they should not fall. It is He who makes the storm to cease, and calms the waves of the sea, and lulls all their roaring. The tumult of the people also, that tempest of man's agitated passions, which when many men are stirred up together is not unlike the raging of the ocean, to this He can say with ease, hitherto shalt thou go, and no further; and it obeys. So fearful are the tokens of his power, that notwithstanding the manifestations of his love, which reach from east to west, yet all mankind, in all quarters of the world, are made to tremble under his mighty hand. How much more they who know the tidings of his grace, how much more must they stand in awe, and sin not ! For how can they make due returns for love so inconceivable? how can they attain to righteousness so pure and perfect? how can they escape if they neglect so great salvation?

But though the mercy of God be indeed just ground of awful reverence, let us rather now look on it as here set forth before us, in all its loveliness, as the object of our love. Let us view God in the order of his providence, lighting up the world afresh each morning with the brightness of the rising sun, and making also the outgoings of the evening to rejoice with the glory in which it sets. Behold how He visits the earth with needful rain in due season, how He waters it with rivers, and refreshes it with dews. See how He prepares it for the seed which He has provided, and watches to bless with growth the time of its springing, and with increase the season of its bearing. Mark the pastures clothed with flocks, the valleys covered over with corn, and even the wilderness not without its share of good. And now look upon all these earthly blessings as emblems of God's bounty to the soul. Think of Him providing pardon for the penitent, the light of divine knowledge for the ignorant, and the daily bread of grace for them that hunger after righteousness. Or observe how in the devout apprehension of the church He crowns the year with his goodness; each season connected in our minds with some token of his love, from the birth of our Saviour, to his death, and resurrection, and ascension, and the outpouring of the Spirit of his grace; from the seedtime in which his doctrine is implanted, to the harvest season for the setting forth of good works. Observe these things, as they ought to be observed. Regard them as they deserved to be regarded. And say, have not we, who are so greatly blest, cause to sing to God, and shout for joy, all the day long, and all the year round?

*The psalmist exhorteth all lands to praise God.*

To the chief Musician, A Song or Psalm.

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands :  
 2 Sing forth the honour of his name : make his praise glorious.  
 3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works ! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.  
 4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee ; they shall sing *to thy name*. Selah.  
 5 Come and see the works of God : *he is terrible in his doing* toward the children of men.  
 6 He turned the sea into dry *land* : they went through the flood on foot : there did we rejoice in him.  
 7 He ruleth by his power for ever ; his eyes behold the nations : let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.  
 8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard :  
 9 Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.  
 10 Forthou, O God, hast proved us : thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.  
 11 Thou broughtest us into the net ; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.  
 12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads ; we went through fire and through water : but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place*.  
 13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings : I will pay thee my vows,  
 14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.  
 15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams ; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.  
 16 Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.  
 17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.  
 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear *me* :  
 19 But verily God hath heard *me* ; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.  
 20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

## LECTURE 902.

*We are bound to make the Gospel known to all men.*

All lands are here invited to “make a joyful noise unto God,” to “sing forth the honour of his name,” and to “make his praise glorious.” Let us for our parts obey the invitation. Let us, as far as in us lies, promote a due compliance with it throughout our own beloved country, and also throughout all the world. And let us, whilst we own to God how great his power is, rejoice to think that a time is coming, when by means thereof all his enemies shall submit themselves unto Him, and all the earth shall



worship Him, and sing unto his name. The great works, which God wrought for his people of old, are here insisted on, as arguments fit to lay before the rest of mankind, in order to persuade them to praise his name. Let us, who, thanks to his grace in giving us the knowledge of his word, are acquainted with these marvellous doings, let us take means to make them known as far and wide as possible. And by distributing his holy Scriptures and sending forth his ordained ministers, to teach them, and explain them, let us say with the psalmist to the people in all lands, "Come and see the works of God."

Great things and marvellous are those which He did aforetime for the Israelites; as in bringing them safely through the Red Sea, displacing the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan, and planting in his people in their stead, and proving them by many an affliction, and saving them by many a mighty deliverance. These things let us make known to all mankind; and not these only, but also his gracious dealings with believers in his Son, which were prefigured by his mercies to the Jews. If they have been signally delivered, so have we. If their lives were often wonderfully spared, our souls have been saved. If it became them to be most careful to pay their vows, and to offer all the sacrifices appointed in the Law; it becomes us to sacrifice ourselves, our souls, and bodies, our whole time, and all our substance, unto God, as we are most deeply bound by solemn pledges, and most abundantly encouraged to do by very precious promises. And if it was fit for them, a people that dwelt alone, see Num. 23. 9, and who were separated from all others by God Himself, if it was fit for them to invite others to worship the true God; how much more is it fit for us, who have been planted in when they were cast off, to exert ourselves to the utmost of our power in making known those glad tidings of salvation, which we have found to be unlimited as regards ourselves, and which we assuredly know to be intended without limit for the benefit of all mankind!

*The psalmist prayeth for the increase of Christ's kingdom.*

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 God be merciful unto us, and<br>bless us; <i>and</i> cause his face to<br>shine upon us. Selah.        | vern the nations upon earth.<br>Selah.  |
| 2 That thy way may be known<br>upon earth, thy saving health<br>among all nations.                       | 5 Let the people praise thee,<br>O God; let all the people praise<br>thee.                                |
| 3 Let the people praise thee, O<br>God; let all the people praise thee.                                  | 6 Then shall the earth yield her<br>increase; <i>and</i> God, <i>even</i> our own<br>God, shall bless us. |
| 4 O let the nations be glad and<br>sing for joy: for thou shalt judge<br>the people righteously, and go- | 7 God shall bless us; <i>and</i> all<br>the ends of the earth shall fear<br>him.                          |

## LECTURE 903.

*The blessedness of being made partakers of the Gospel.*

Nothing can more clearly shew what a blindness there must have been on the hearts of the Jews, than that with the words of this psalm familiar to their minds, and held to be the words of inspiration, they should have been jealous of the communication of the Gospel to the Gentiles. It is true, that God is here at first intreated to bless his people Israel, and to cause his face to shine more especially on them. It is true, that He is requested to make known his saving health among other nations, by means of the great blessings to be imparted to the Israelites. And this no doubt was in accordance with one great end of their separation from the rest of mankind, that in them, and in their exaltation, as long as they continued faithful, God might make his great goodness and power to be known unto all the other nations of the earth. Still they were here taught to pray, that all other nations might know Him, and his way, and his saving health. They were directed to desire, that the Gentiles far and wide might worship the true God with devout praises, might be glad in Him, and sing for joy, might share with themselves the benefit of his righteous judgments, and continual governance, as well as of that special providence to which they knew they owed it, that their land as long as they served God truly, yielded its increase abundantly.

Here then there was put into their mouths not only an utterance of universal good will, but an expression of such brotherly kindness, as implied, that they would be glad, if it should so please God, for all nations of the earth to share with them, as far as possible, their own very eminent advantages. How unlike that grudging temper, to which they were given up in after times, when they had first obstinately rejected their Messiah, and when they were no less obstinate in opposing the good work of preach-

ing his Gospel throughout all the world ! There are not perhaps amongst us many who would avow the intention of opposing this sacred enterprize. But are there not some who seem to grudge it its success, at least so far as to be very reluctant to believe that it does in any degree succeed ? Are there not many who grudge to give any substantial assistance in the work ? Are there not many who neither help it at all with their means, nor forward it by their prayers, nor so much as care to give it their good wishes ? Oh, how can they expect that God will be merciful to them, if they care not to be merciful to their perishing fellow creatures ? How can they look for his blessing on their own souls, if firmly as they hold this psalm to be God's word, they give no thought, and take no pains, towards making his way known upon earth, his saving health among all nations ?

Great are the advantages which manifest themselves here immediately on earth, great are the temporal advantages which ensue, on the conversion of the heathen to the faith of Christ. The reason of the thing would lead us to expect, that which experience has proved to be a fact, that in proportion as the Gospel is received, believed, and practised, in any nation, by the people, and by their rulers, there does good government prevail, the just administration of righteous laws, and there also does the earth yield her increase, in return for the increased industry and skill of those who cultivate it. Thus much our own reason would lead us to expect. But here we are promised more, a blessing from God, that without which no industry or skill, no wisdom or mutual forbearance of ours, could secure us peace or plenty. And are we not here promised more than this world's blessings ? May we not reckon also on a spiritual abundance, an increase of faith, and hope, and joy, a growth in grace, a fellowship in the privileges of a heavenly city, and a joint partaking in that true liberty, the freedom from the bondage of corruption, wherewith Christ has made us free ? Yes, these, through the blessing of God, are ours. And as many as God calls, and unto as many as we make known his calling, and make his Gospel to be joyfully accepted, these blessed privileges are theirs. Oh that God then would increase their number an hundred fold ! And oh that He may use us, and our prayers, and gifts, and labours of love, as the blessed instruments of causing all the ends of the earth to fear and to love Him !



*David recounteth motives to the praising of God.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm or Song of David.

1 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

2 As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away: as wax melteth before the fire, *so* let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.

6 God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even* Sinai itself *was* moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

11 The Lord gave the word: great *was* the company of those that published it.

12 Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

13 Though ye have lien among the pots, *yet shall ye be as* the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it *was* white as snow in Salmon.

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; an high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.

16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy place.

18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among* them.

## LECTURE 904.

*Of valuing the gifts given us by Christ our King.*

We read in the Book of Numbers, that "it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." Num. 10. 35. These are the words with which this psalm begins, and which we may suppose that David took, as a kind of

text or heading for his sacred song, on the occasion of his establishing the ark upon mount Zion. The ark contained the tables of God's covenant, and it was regarded as the token of God's presence. When therefore it was lifted up, David thinks of God arising to destroy utterly them that hate Him, and at the same time he calls on the righteous to rejoice in God exceedingly. And for these things he would have us extol the Lord with joyful praises, for his greatness, signified by his riding on the heavens; by his name Jah, which conveys the notion of an uncreated self existing Spirit; and because of his mercy to the fatherless, to the widows, and to them that are alone, or are imprisoned. Nor are his special mercies to the Israelites to be forgotten, how He led them through the wilderness, and there fed them, not only with bread for the body, rained down from heaven, but also with the food of his word for the soul; and how He multiplied his people exceedingly, having appointed them to be the preachers of his truth, by the manifestation of its power in their lives, unto all that dwelt around them. How did they go forth to constant victory in the strength of God! How did they exchange the shame of their Egyptian bondage, for the triumphant array of conquerors! How were kings scattered before them, and the high hills of other nations made to hide their diminished heads before the hill in which God delighted to dwell! What chariots could stand before "the chariots of the Lord?" what host could abide his thousands of angels, with the Lord Himself "among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place?" See Exod. 19. 12. What monarch could match with that servant of the Lord, who, having led forth the Lord's people out of the house of bondage, went up into the mount, and there received the law and the tables of the testimony, these precious gifts of a gracious God to a rebellious people, the token of his dwelling among them? One King there is that can, and one only, He of whom Moses was a type, and of whose ascension into the heavens the going up of Moses into the mount was typical; one King there is, great beyond all compare, and He is Christ the Lord; and one people yet more highly favoured than the Israelites, and they are the people called Christians. For them has Christ led captivity captive; redeeming them from the slavery of sin. For their sake He came down from heaven to earth, and afterwards ascended up on high, thence sending down to them, rebellious as they also oftentimes have proved, the gift of the Spirit, and the record of the Gospel. See Eph. 4. 8. May we value as we ought his inestimable gifts! May the Gospel be in all things the rule of our lives! May the Holy Spirit of God be enthroned, honoured, and sanctified in the temple of our hearts!

*David recounteth fresh topics of praise to God.*

19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*, *even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

20 *He that is* our God, *is* the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord *belong* the issues from death.

21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies, *and* the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea :

23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, *and* the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

24 They have seen thy goings, O God; *even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

25 The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.

26 Bless ye God in the congregations, *even* the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

27 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, the princes of Judah *and* their council, the princes of Zebulun, *and* the

princes of Naphtali.

28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.

29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.

31 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the LORD; Selah:

33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.

34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the clouds.

35 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his* people. Blessed *be* God.

## LECTURE 905.

*The duty of winning the heathen to God's service.*

Many fresh motives to the praising of God are suggested in the latter portion of this psalm. His daily mercies are first mentioned. They are new every morning. Again, He is "the God of our salvation," this is twice mentioned, and it is added, "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." And salvation means with us much more than the preserving of this present life; and we consider it to be true of God, alike in the case of the body, and in that of the soul, that He can create, and He destroy. Next it is stated that "God shall wound the head of



his enemies;" and who these are is thus explained, namely, such as go on still in their wickedness. How indeed could we praise God, either as just, or as good, if we thought that those who thus persist in disobedience could continue to do so with impunity? And then it is mentioned, that the Lord has promised his people, that they also should prevail against their enemies; as they had done aforetime, so should they do hereafter. And surely we may well praise God, in the midst of our present conflicts, for the hope that we shall live in another world, to enjoy a signal triumph over the enemies of our souls, those evil spirits which are now bent on our destruction.

The solemn procession of the ark is next dwelt upon as a topic of praise to God; and the attendance of singers, and of players on instruments, and the gathering together of the tribes, all these things are set forth to God's glory; with an invitation to bless "God in the congregation," and with a prophetic assurance, that when the temple should be built at Jerusalem, there should kings bring presents unto Him. Numerous and costly were the gifts so dedicated. But let us now rather praise the Lord, for those which have since been offered to his blessed Son, in the devotion of whole kingdoms to his service. To us the times have long since come, when God has rebuked the idolatries of the heathen; and when the nations which used to delight in war have given place to the subjects of "the Prince of peace." Isai. 9. 6. The most civilized, the most powerful, of the kingdoms of the earth, are now enlisted under the banners of the Gospel. Egypt has had its saints and martyrs; though it is now again a place "where Satan dwelleth." Rev. 2. 13. Ethiopia, if this mean as is supposed Abyssinia, even now stretches out her hands unto God. These are the gifts that princes do well to offer, their own devotion, and their influence with their people. Thus it is that God has been largely honoured with presents, because of his temple at Jerusalem; the first fruits of the Gentiles have been dedicated to the service of his ever blessed Son.

Since therefore it has thus come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them ye are not my people, there they have been called the children of the living God; see Hos. 1. 10; let us, who are amongst the number so highly privileged, be ever ready to take up the words of David; and to call upon the other nations of the earth, to sing praises unto the Lord. Let us bid men see the state of his divine majesty, faintly represented in the glory of the firmament. Let us tell them to hear his mighty voice, feebly echoed in the roaring of the thunder. Let us point to his strength; how terrible it is! and to his grace towards them that believe in Him; how excellent! And by shewing forth the power of his grace in the devoted thankfulness of our lives, let us endeavour to win those who know Him not, to join with us in saying heartily, and joyfully, and reverently, "Blessed be God!"

*David declareth his shame and compunction.*To the chief Musician, upon Shoshannim, *A Psalm* of David.

- 1 Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.
- 2 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
- 3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
- 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away.
- 5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.
- 6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.
- 7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.
- 8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.
- 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.
- 10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, *that was* to my reproach.
- 11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.
- 12 They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I *was* the song of the drunkards.
- 13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, *in an acceptable time.* O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.
- 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.
- 15 Let not the water flood over-flow me, neither let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

## LECTURE 906.

*What dreadful things our Lord underwent for us.*

Many passages in this psalm are applied in the New Testament to our blessed Lord and Saviour, and to the sufferings which befel those who brought Him to the cross. But let us first observe the application of the words to David, who is here, as elsewhere, a type of Christ, not only in that which he suffered, but also in that which he felt and said; with only this one broad distinction, that David brought his sufferings on himself by sin, whereas Christ suffered the just for the unjust. David then, having sinned grievously, experienced the most deep compunction of soul, and was exposed to a degree of shame and scorn proportioned to his previous profession of faith in God, and devotion to God's service. The tidings of God's gracious pardon, so mercifully imparted to him immediately on his full confession of

offence, though they must have removed the apprehensions of eternal punishment, must also have added to the depth of godly sorrow, in which he felt his spirit overwhelmed. And his present penitence, and redoubled zeal for the house and service of the Lord, seem to have furnished fresh matter of scorn to the wicked, to those miserable men, who whether high or low, sober or drunken, give vent to their enmity towards God by mocking at the frailties of his faithful servants. But they give themselves unto prayer. This was David's course as here set before us. And like to this must be our course, if we ever supply occasion to God's enemies to blaspheme; we must not shrink from undergoing the open shame which we incur, whensoever we condemn our own past practices by publicly and openly renouncing them. We must cast ourselves upon the multitude of God's mercy, not only to forgive our sins, but also to enable us to bear the burden of our grief and shame.

And now next let us observe how many of the things here mentioned were undergone for our sakes by Christ our Lord. He himself tells us, in St. John's Gospel, of the hatred which He met with from the Jews; that it was in order that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, "They hated me without a cause." John 15. 25. In the same Gospel we read, that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John 1. 11. And again, "Neither did his brethren believe in him." John 7. 5. So truly did He become a stranger unto his brethren, and an alien unto his mother's children. In the risk He ran when clearing the temple of those who profaned it with their traffic, "his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." John 2. 17. And when St. Paul would urge us, instead of pleasing our own selves, to please our neighbour for his good to edification, he argues thus: "For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Rom. 15. 3. All this then did our Lord personally endure for us; all this "contradiction of sinners against himself." Heb. 12. 3. And much more, we may well believe, He endured within Himself, under the grievous load of the sins of us all. How He bare them, how He answered unto God for all of them, these are mysteries beyond our comprehension. But when we observe, in this psalm, viewed as David's language, what an agony of compunction sin works, by means of grace, in the heart of sinful man, it may help to enlarge our notion of the dreadful horror which He who knew no sin must have undergone, when charged as guilty, and suffering for the guilt, of the sins of all mankind.



*David prayeth for help, and for the confounding of his enemies.*

16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness *is* good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.

19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame and my dishonour: mine adversaries *are* all before thee.

20 Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none.

21 They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

22 Let their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have been* for their welfare, *let it become* a trap.

23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

24 Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

25 Let their habitation be desolate; *and* let none dwell in their tents.

26 For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

32 The humble shall see *this*, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.

33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.

35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.

36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

#### LECTURE 907.

*These imprecations are profitable for our warning.*

Looking at these words first as the words of David spoken of his own case, we observe him pleading God's great mercy and lovingkindness, in his prayer for help to be extended to himself, and yet seeming to use language devoid of mercy in regard to those who had evil intreated him. But we must remember, that though these are the words of David, he spake them as he was moved by the Holy Spirit of God. And though they may be interpreted in the first instance of his own case, it might be well that those

who had triumphed in his fall, and who took occasion thence to triumph against God, should be warned, on God's authority, by David himself, of the punishment which befitted their cruel conduct and ungodly words. For God knows how to be at once merciful and just. And if we may behold in his dealings, as the apostle bids us, both "the goodness and severity of God," Rom. 11. 22, we need not wonder that we can also hear both expressed, even in the prayers of his inspired servants.

But we cannot confine the words before us to the case of David. We know that our blessed Lord, when expiring on the cross, made mention of the thirst He felt, that this Scripture might be fulfilled: "they gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." See John 19. 28—30. We may justly consider that when He said of Jerusalem, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," Matt. 23. 38, He had in view these other words of this psalm, "Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents." We find that St. Paul also applies this passage to the judgments which befel those who were the enemies of our Lord: saying, "And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway." Rom 11. 9, 10. We therefore regard these imprecations, as they are sometimes called, in the light of a solemn sentence, declared on God's authority, not only against all such sinners as are here described, but more especially against those who thus sinned against Jesus Christ. And that they should be put in the form of prayers into the mouth of David, who was an eminent type of our blessed Lord, this may prepare us for the day, when He, who as our Saviour is full of grace and truth, will be heard to pronounce words far more terrible than these, in the awful character of our Judge.

These words then are profitable for our warning. And instead of making them the subject of foolish and vain questions, let us lay them to heart as amongst the many passages of Scripture, in which "the wrath of God is declared against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. 1. 18. And let us at the same time take comfort from the thought, that if by God's grace the natural enmity of our hearts against Him is changed for love, and for delight in the fulfilling of his will, then the day of judgment will be to us a day of joy, and however much we may here have to suffer with Christ, all will be swallowed up in the triumph of that hour, when we shall be also glorified together. Here we may be poor and sorrowful, and we ought to be poor in spirit, and to mourn for sin. But the salvation of God will then set us up on high. And the praises of God, which we begin to sing here in the house of our pilgrimage, will resound from our thankful lips in the mansions of eternal joy.

*David beseecheth God to make haste to help him.**To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.*

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| <p>1 <i>Make haste</i>, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.</p> <p>2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.</p> <p>3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that</p> | <p>say, Aha, aha.</p> <p>4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.</p> <p>5 But I <i>am</i> poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.</p> |
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## LECTURE 908.

*That we ought to pray earnestly for instant help.*

This psalm is nearly word for word the same as the last five verses of the fortieth psalm. It is called in the title “a psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.” This may mean that the prayer here uttered was one which David much wished to remember frequently; or that the truth here taught was such as all men would do well to bear in mind continually. Let us endeavour to bear in mind this truth. Let us frequently make use of this prayer. We shall find it suitable to express our great need of God’s speedy help, when we are assaulted by the enemies of our souls. “Make haste,” let us say with David, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord.” Let us pray urgently, as if we really felt desirous earnestly. Let us feel desirous earnestly, as if we really were aware, that our evil adversary the devil spares no pains for our destruction, and is endeavouring without respite or delay to make us wicked and miserable for ever. Time stays not. Satan waits not. Only man is apt to think that there is no haste; man who knows not what an hour may bring forth, man whose life is never sure for a single moment, and whose utmost span of earthly existence is as nothing compared with the eternity awaiting him. Man is apt to think, that he has leisure to sin, and that he will have ample leisure to repent. Man needs to be continually put in remembrance, that in all the exertion which he can himself make, towards working out his own salvation, he has no time to spare; and that in all the help for which he must look to God, and which he must seek of God by prayer, he needs to pray God urgently, that He will be pleased to make haste.

The words of David, in which he prays, that they who desire his hurt may be turned backward and put to confusion, may be very obviously and profitably interpreted of the enemies of our souls. But there can be little doubt that he intended to apply them in the first instance to those who, either under Saul or under Absalom,



endeavoured to take his life. Against such as these he was directed to pray, that their schemes might be frustrated, and they themselves put to shame. Even supposing that we had the same authority as David to use prayers like these, it is probable that most of us are not aware of having any enemies amongst men, in regard to whom we could direct any such thoughts or petitions. Many will not easily be able to understand, how one man can feel or harbour such deadly enmity towards his fellow creatures, as is here implied. Never having been exposed to the malignity of hatred, they little think to what a pitch it is carried in the hearts of the proud and passionate, the malicious and revengeful. But there are some who can enter much more fully into David's feelings, because they have encountered bitterness of wrath, like that which rankled in the hearts of David's enemies. There are some who, like David, have provoked the enmity of others by doing their own duty unto God. Let these, as they read the words before us, instead of dwelling on the wrongs which they have met with from evil men, be made thereby so much the more alive to the malignity of evil spirits. If man can be so bitter, let them argue, and if man's wrath can be so furious, how much more to be dreaded is the rage of Satan. If it be possible for a fellow creature, one made of the same flesh and blood as myself, to take pleasure in my hurt or ruin; how much more dreadful is the certainty, that there is one more powerful, more subtle, than man, whose object it is, whose delight and glory it would be, to destroy my soul for ever!

And if these thoughts are likely to fill the soul with gloomy apprehensions, we may turn for comfort to the doctrine which is taught us in the concluding portion of this psalm. "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee." This is our way then to rejoice in the Lord, we must seek Him; "And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified." This is our way to have our sighs of mourning turned into songs of praise; we must love the salvation of God. "But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God." We must be sensible of our helplessness, and ready to own our dependence upon God. "Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying." We must trust in God as alone able to help and to deliver us. And as we said at the first, so we say again at the last, we must pray to God to make haste to help us. The time is short. The day is at hand. The enemy presses. Our danger is imminent. Let our prayers be frequent, urgent, incessant, and let us pray for instant help.

*The psalmist prayeth for deliverance from his enemies.*

- 1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.
- 2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.
- 3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.
- 4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.
- 5 For thou art my hope, O Lord God: *thou art my trust* from my youth.
- 6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise *shall be* continually of thee.
- 7 I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.
- 8 Let my mouth be filled with thy praise *and with* thy honour all the day.
- 9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.
- 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
- 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver him.
- 12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.
- 13 Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

## LECTURE 909.

*Our faithfully serving God is likely to give offence to man.*

The beginning of this psalm is like the beginning of the thirty-first; and in both of them we meet with this remarkable figure of speech, the comparing almighty God to a "strong habitation," or "house of defence," Ps. 31. 2, to a "fortress," and to a "rock." These are expressions, which we should scarcely have thought it meet for us to use, in speaking of the great and holy God, were it not that He has Himself thus vouchsafed in his word to encourage us to use them. Let us then, being thus encouraged, both pray to Him in terms like these, and also learn thus to regard Him in our minds. Does a habitation give us shelter? Behold God protects us from the storms of temptation, from those who would break through and steal the everlasting treasure of our souls. Does a fortress yield security from enemies? Behold God will make us safe from the assaults of Satan. Does a rock afford a firm foundation for a house, a secure site for a fortress? Behold God is the Rock of our salvation, on Him is founded all our hope of pardon, peace, and heaven.

Though there is no title to this psalm stating that it is David's, we shall think it likely to be his, when we observe its

resemblance to others which are ascribed to him ; and especially in the manner in which the writer of this psalm makes mention of his enemies. For this appears to be a characteristic feature in the life of David, that he was exposed, on so many occasions and for so great a length of time, to the enmity of wicked men. And this is one of the points in which David is so remarkable a type of Christ ; who even whilst yet an infant was sought for by the jealousy of Herod, desiring to put Him to death, and who was at last betrayed, by one of his own apostles, into the hands of those, who long had wished to compass his destruction. And is not this also a very common case with all true followers of Christ, that there are those who bear them ill will for Christ's sake ? We may have no enemies, in the common application of the term, none who have quarrelled with us about any worldly business, and delight in any harm which they can inflict on us. But if we faithfully do our duty to God, on the principle of obeying and honouring Him, for Christ's sake, and in conformity with the spirit of the things taught us by our Saviour in the Gospel, we shall not easily escape giving bitter offence to those, who love not the Lord Jesus in sincerity ; whose cold affections towards God are silently censured by our zeal, whose love of this present world is made to stand out in all the more marked deformity, by contrast with our determination to renounce it. These will not perhaps do us harm, but they are glad if harm happens to us. And especially they triumph, if we commit sin, that worst of harm which can befall us. They delight to say, that the God in whom we trust has forsaken us. They delight to think that there is a prospect of our being added to the number of those, who like themselves are wicked and malicious.

Now whenever we meet with the consequences of enmity like this, and are pained to think that our fellow creatures should bear us ill will, and are tempted to please them at the risk of displeasing God, let us earnestly pray to Him that He will deliver us from this snare. Let us plead with Him his past mercies, our birth, and our sustenance from that time to this, and the many marvellous things which He has done in our behalf. And let us earnestly intreat Him to extend the same parental care both to our bodies and our souls throughout the years which yet remain to us. From the painful apprehension of man's ill will let us turn our thoughts to the lovingkindness of the Lord. Let us consider it a privilege to be hated for his name's sake. And since now we are never called on to lay down our lives for the truth, let us be thankful if we may reach after the martyr's crown, and haply by God's great mercy reach unto it, by putting up cheerfully with the loss of friends, or even losing the affection of our dearest relatives, rather than not continue to love as heartily as possible Him who has so greatly loved us.



*The psalmist prayeth for continuance of help from God.*

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. great things : O God, who is like unto thee !

15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day ; for I know not the numbers thereof. 20 Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

16 I will go in the strength of the Lord God : I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. 21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth : and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God : unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.

18 Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not ; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee ; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done 24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long : for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

#### LECTURE 910.

*Of speaking thankfully, and joining to sing God's praise.*

Neither the experience of present trouble, nor the apprehension lest it should be continued for a time, is able to shake the psalmist from his firm resolution, that he will praise God more and more. Our trials may be many, but the mercies of God are numberless. And every repeated trial we have to undergo is so tempered, if we rightly view it, with manifestations of God's goodness, and is so well calculated, if we bear it as we ought, to minister to the increase of our patience, hope, faith, and love, that it ought also to stir us up to enlarge our thankfulness, and to renew and multiply our songs of praise. For what is it that we learn by each renewed temptation, what but that we are weak, and that God is mighty, what but that without Him we should be sure to fall, what but that He is willing as well as able to help, what but that our frailties are so manifold, and our best services so deficient, that we depend altogether upon the strength of the Lord God, and have nothing to make mention of as regards ourselves, but, only his righteousness to praise, only his justice, truth, and mercy, in saving us through Christ Jesus, to set forth, and glorify ?

All perhaps will admit that this is a just view of the uses of affliction. But can we all truly say that we have made this use of it ? Have we all turned our temptations to this good account ?

Can we all join with David, whom we suppose to be the writer of this psalm, in declaring, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works?" Have our lives been such as to shew forth the praises of God? And have we been free to declare them also with our lips? And if we pray to be spared yet a little, is it in the hope, that when we are greyheaded, we may be able yet further to edify our brethren, and to glorify our Lord? This was the intention, the hope, the prayer, of the psalmist: "Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." This has been the psalmist's privilege to a very eminent degree; his words having been made helpful in the setting forth of God's glory throughout all generations. But let us not suppose, that because our sphere of usefulness is limited, we are the less bound to do all we can, or the less blest in doing all we can, towards promoting our Maker's glory. No; it is the privilege of every one, it is the chief end for which we have all been made, to shew forth the praises of Him who created us, and who has also most graciously redeemed us. Whether we consider the great things which He did in our creation, or those which He wrought in our redemption, or those which He is daily bringing to pass in making us holy by his Spirit, we shall in any case see cause to ask with devout adoration, "O God, who is like unto thee?" we shall in every case endeavour to communicate to others the impressions of reverence, thankfulness, and love, with which we ourselves are inclined to say to God, "O God, who is like unto thee?"

And now as to that which is here said of God's shewing the psalmist great and sore troubles, and quickening him again, and bringing him up again from the depths of the earth, and increasing his greatness, and comforting him on every side, let us apply it to our own expected death, and resurrection and ascension into heaven, and the comfort which God gives us here in the hope of glory hereafter. Let us endeavour to bring our lips to speak of these things thankfully in our daily discourse with one another. But let us especially rejoice, when we unite to sing and praise God's name in public worship, for all his mercies vouchsafed unto us. To the sound of solemn music let us add the harmony of thankful hearts. And let us, according to our several abilities, express the thankfulness of our hearts, by the tuneful utterance of our lips. And then what could be on earth more like to heaven than to sing the praises of God in the congregation? What employment of such weak vile creatures as we are by nature could be more suitable to that which we become by grace, more edifying to ourselves and to our brethren, more expressive of our reverence and love towards God, or more apt to prepare us for that in which we hope to be employed throughout all eternity in heaven?

*David foresheweth the dominion of the king's son.**A Psalm for Solomon.*

- 1 Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.  
 2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.  
 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.  
 4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.  
 5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.  
 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers *that* water the earth.  
 7 In his *days* shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.  
 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.  
 9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.  
 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.  
 11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.  
 12 For he shall deliver the needy, when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.  
 13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.  
 14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.  
 15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.  
 16 There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.  
 17 His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.  
 18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.  
 19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen.  
 20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

## LECTURE 911.

*The extent and glory of the kingdom of Christ.*

Though the title does not mention that this is a psalm of David, the concluding verse seems to signify that it was the last psalm to which David gave utterance. As his end drew near, he was led at once to pray for and to prophesy the extent and prosperity of the reign of Solomon; and that, in terms which we can



have little hesitation in applying to the kingdom of our Saviour Christ. The things which David chiefly desired, in the reign of his son Solomon, were that he should serve God, and should judge the people uprightly, and should give encouragement to the righteous, and should enjoy peace, and yet extend his dominion, subduing nations, and making kings give him gifts and tribute, and that he should protect the oppressed, and that his people should pray for him, and praise God for him, and that in his reign there should be both an increase in the number of the people, and in the plenty which God gave them to enjoy.

But these things were not fulfilled in Solomon's reign, without a great and grievous drawback in the falling away of Solomon himself. And whilst David, at the close of his days, was spared the pain of foreseeing and foretelling the idolatry of his son, he was led to speak in terms which are strictly true in their full sense only of the great Son of David who arose up in after times, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He was both "the King," and "the King's Son;" the Son of God, and God himself. He it was who came to set the captive free, and to preach the Gospel to the poor. He it is whom men shall fear "as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations." In his days shall flourish righteousness and peace. To his dominion there shall be no limit. To his throne shall all the kings of the earth bring presents, bowing down before Him. And his great glory, for which He shall be thus honoured, is this, that He is the Deliverer of them that are in need, the Redeemer of mankind. They whom He has redeemed shall also pray to God through his intercession, and shall praise Him, and also praise God through his name. The multitude of them that believe in Him shall increase from, as it were, a handful of corn to an abundant crop. And in Him, as was long ago foretold to Abraham, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. See Gen. 22. 18. Let us therefore now join with David in his last words of prayer; and let us with David praise God, and bless his holy name. Let us pray that He, in whom we have all been blessed, may Himself have his glorious name blessed for evermore. And let us desire, and also help as largely as we can, that the whole earth may be filled with his glory. "Amen." So be it, heavenly Father. So let thy kingdom come. So let thy eternal Son reign in the hearts of those whom He saved by his death; so let Him be glorified in faith, and love, in their devotion and holiness of life! "Amen."

*Asaph meditateth on the prosperity, and end of the wicked.*

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 Truly God *is* good to Israel, the generation of thy children.  
even to such as are of a clean heart.
- 2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.
- 3 For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- 4 For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm.
- 5 They *are* not in trouble *as* other men; neither are they plagued like other men.
- 6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment.
- 7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.
- 8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily.
- 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.
- 10 Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.
- 11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most high?
- 12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.
- 13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency.
- 14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.
- 15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against*
- 16 When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me;
- 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.
- 18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou *castedst* them down into destruction.
- 19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.
- 20 As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.
- 21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.
- 22 So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee.
- 23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.
- 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.
- 25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.
- 26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.
- 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them *that* go a whoring from thee.
- 28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.

## LECTURE 912.

*The infinite advantages of those who serve God.*

The prosperity of the wicked was a matter of great perplexity to the righteous, as early as the times of Job. The psalmist, namely Asaph, who lived long after Job under the dispensation of the Law, had additional reasons for expecting a more manifest immediate retribution, than that which seems to have been observable in his time. And even Christians, who are expressly taught to wait for the judgment of eternity, are not unfrequently sore troubled, when like Asaph they see the wicked flourishing in life, calm in death, prosperous in pride and violence, profane in speech, presuming on security, and yet allowed to be secure, exalted above those who serve God faithfully, and whose portion is oftentimes no more than to suffer in his behalf continually. But let no one for a single moment entertain the faithless thought, "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain." Let no one dare to contradict the concurrent testimony of all God's devoted children. Let no one, who has felt the perplexities of Asaph, fail to go with him into the sanctuary of God, and there learn the end of the ungodly. When the veil of sense is lifted up, and faith perceives the truth as it really is, who would wish to have his portion with the wicked? who would choose that prosperity of theirs, which serves but to make their fall more sure, more sudden, more terrible?

Whilst however all their seeming happiness is but "as a dream when one awaketh," the prosperity of the righteous is real and lasting; or, as the psalmist declares in the outset, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." He may seem to be favourable to the ungodly; He really is so to the good. To think otherwise is foolishness. To grudge the wicked their vain and transitory joy, is the part of one devoid of understanding. What, would we wish our end to be like theirs? Or would we choose to have gains and pleasures for the present, which tempt us the more surely to an end so dreadful? Would we take them in exchange for that which God now gives us if we serve Him faithfully, namely, his presence continually, the support of his right hand, the guidance of his counsel, and the assured inheritance of his glory? No, if we have Him, surely we have all that we can desire; whether it be in heaven or on earth. Our flesh may suffer or our spirits fail, but God can more than make amends for every thing we undergo; nay, with Him to strengthen us, we rejoice in undergoing it. We rejoice in bearing whatsoever He thinks fit to lay upon us. We had infinitely rather suffer according to his will, than flourish in disobedience or neglect of his commandments. And when we think of the end awaiting those who now prosper in their wickedness, the very sight of their prosperity, instead of making us dissatisfied, rather suggests the thought, of how good it is for us to draw near and to keep near unto God.



*The psalmist complaineth of the desecration of the temple.*

Maschil of Asaph.

1 O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.

5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

6 But now they break down

the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by *casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

9 We see not our signs: *there* is no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

## LECTURE 913.

*The grounds on which we should pray God to defend his church.*

There is no certainty as to who the Asaph was who is mentioned in the title of this psalm, or as to the exact period of time, and particular visitation of trouble, to which it refers. Some have thought that it was written at the time when the first temple was destroyed, by Nebuzar-adan, the servant of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. See 2 Kings 25. 8, 9. Others consider that it relates to the destruction of the second temple by the Romans; viewing it as a kind of prophetic lamentation over the dreadful calamities which then fell upon the nation of the Jews. But it is not improbable that it may refer to the abominations committed in the temple during the evil reign of Ahaz. For during the reign of this wicked king, which lasted sixteen years, we find it recorded in the history, that he did many things, to which it is not unlikely that the expressions of this psalm may be allusions. As for instance, he "made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen." And again, he introduced into the house of the Lord an altar made according to the fashion of one which he had seen at Damascus; and he removed the altar of the Lord's house from its proper place, and used this other altar of an unhallowed pattern for all the sacrifices which he offered. And again, he removed the laver from off its basis, having first

cut off their borders; and he also took down the brazen sea from off the oxen. And again, "the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria." 2 Kings 16. 3—18.

Now when we reflect on the extent to which these profanations of the temple were carried, and the length of time they lasted, we shall deem the expressions of this psalm not too strong, to express the horror which any pious Israelite must have felt at the afflicting sight. And it might be the Asaph of whom we read in the subsequent reign of Hezekiah, called "Asaph the seer," 2 Chron. 29. 30, who both in the preceding psalm has set forth the end of the ungodly, and in this is beseeching God to uphold the cause of his desecrated sanctuary. Certainly the writer, be he who he may, speaks of "this mount Zion," as one who was still inhabiting Jerusalem, rather than like one who was dwelling as a captive in a distant country. And though as a good subject he would not be likely to call his own king "the enemy," yet as the Lord's prophet he might be directed to denounce him as one of the enemies of the Lord. For who indeed are his enemies in so fearful a degree as those, who being by their calling his chosen people, reject his service, and choose to themselves other gods, and displace his altar, whether in his outward temple, or in the sanctuary of their hearts, and set up any other altar, as for instance that of mammon, in its stead?

An awful sight it must indeed have been for them that loved the Lord, either to see his holy house profaned by a king of Judah, or to behold it utterly destroyed by the captain of the host of the king of Babylon. And reasonable was the apprehension in either case, that God had cast off his people for ever. And powerful were the pleas here urged for God to interfere, namely, his purchase and redemption of Israel from of old, and his having manifested his glory as dwelling in mount Zion, and the risk of giving occasion to the enemy to blaspheme his holy name. Let us think of these things, and not simply of our own loss, when we apprehend any risk of danger or harm to befall the church, of which it is our glory to be members. And when we pray God to interfere in its behalf, let us plead with Him his great lovingkindnesses of old towards our Zion; how graciously He has been used to manifest his presence amongst us, and how greatly his enemies would rejoice and would blaspheme, in any harm happening to his Church. But whilst we pray faithfully, let us also be warned effectually; God did not spare his temple at Jerusalem, when his people had filled up the measure of their iniquity. He found a way to manifest the excellency of his love to another people, and in another church. Neither does He now stand in need of us; but only we of Him. And if we be found guilty of serving mammon instead of Him, we may expect that He will cast us off for ever.

*The psalmist is urgent with God to manifest his power.*

12 For God *is* my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude *of the wicked*: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.

14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 20 Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.

15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers. 21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.

16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. 22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter. 23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O

#### LECTURE 914.

*Several important topics of prayer.*

An inspired prayer, under whatever circumstances used, is almost sure to be useful as a guide to us in our own supplications. Let us therefore observe the topics urged by Asaph in his urgent petition to God, that He would be pleased to arise, and take into his own hands the cause of his holy temple, which had been profaned by the impiety of his enemies. "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." Let us pray to God as to our King, whom we have been bound to obey from the beginning of our lives, whom we feel at once bound to obey, and delighted to serve. Let us thankfully plead before Him the salvation which He has wrought for the whole race of mankind. "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength." In these words, and in those which follow them, the things alluded to are God's special mercies to the Israelites in dividing the Red Sea, for their safe passage, and in overwhelming their enemies in the waters, and in again making them a safe passage through the flood, by drying up the river Jordan beneath their feet. In like manner we may properly urge in prayer our many national deliverances experienced at God's hand, as a plea for further mercy to be extended to our nation. And considering ourselves interested, as Abraham's children, in all that befel Israel aforetime, we may plead with God his special mercies to his chosen people, as arguments for a continuance of his goodness, to us whom He has chosen,



for a continuance of his bounty and of his blessings to our souls. And in this sense we may take into our mouths the sublime language of Isaiah, not unlike to the words before us: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old." "Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep: that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" Is. 51. 9, 10.

Next we find mention of God's goodness in the creation of day and night, and in preparing both the light and the sun; as also in distributing all the borders of the earth in their due situations, and in making summer and winter. The benefits which we hence derive, being daily renewed unto us, ought to remind us daily of God's bounty, ought to be arguments with us for trusting in Him, as well as grounds for praying unto Him, that He will continue to be bountiful. And these were points in which the wicked and foolish idolaters had blasphemed the name of God; attributing to others, which were no gods, the work which is altogether the Almighty's doing. This therefore formed another argument to plead with God, namely, that He would prove Himself to be the Lord of heaven and earth, by confounding the devices of those who considered Him to be such an one as the gods of the heathen, one of many, amongst whom they might choose for themselves which they would worship and which not. And when we remember how many millions of mankind are still dwelling in the darkness of this ignorance, knowing no better than to take for gods the work of their own hands, or the creatures of their own imagination, we may well urge this plea with God, and beseech Him to instruct them that it is He who made the day and night, summer and winter.

One more very urgent plea is mentioned in the last place: "have respect unto the covenant." The Israelites justly gloried in the Old Testament. But we have "a better covenant." Heb. 8. 6. And whilst we marvel at God's goodness in vouchsafing to enter into covenant with such as we are, still we ought to remember thankfully that He has done so, and we ought to beseech Him, for his covenant's sake, to make his light to shine in "the dark places in the earth," and to make known the glad tidings of peace and love amongst "the habitations of cruelty." That He should suffer his will to be transgressed, and his name to be reproached, and his people to be evil intreated, and the Gospel of his Son to be unknown, and where known lightly esteemed, to so great an extent as He does, is indeed a thing marvellous in our eyes, and we may well ask in wonder, how long? But if it be fearful to reflect, that for all this God will surely visit this wicked world, how painful is it also to think, that amongst the things which delay its conversion unto God, not the least is the lack of frequent and fervent prayer for this special object, on the part of them that are converted!

*The psalmist describeth a righteous reign.*

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, A psalm or Song of Asaph.

1 Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give thanks: for *that* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.

2 When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.

3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.

4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:

5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not with* a stiff neck.

6 For promotion *cometh* neither

from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.

7 But God *is* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, and drink *them*.

9 But I will declare for ever: I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

## LECTURE 915.

*The tribulation which awaits the wicked.*

Some think that this is a psalm of David, composed on the occasion of his taking possession of the throne. But if it was written by the Asaph who flourished in the time of Hezekiah, it may refer to the reign of that good king, so happily succeeding to the evil reign of Ahaz. We have supposed that the psalm which precedes this may be the voice of inspired lamentation, under the afflictions which Ahaz brought upon the church. We may consider the psalm before us as the utterance of inspired thanks, expressed in the person of his successor Hezekiah. We hear the king and priests and people uniting to declare repeatedly, "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks." They had feared lest God had forgotten them. They had wondered how long He would refrain from interposing his arm in their behalf. But now they give this reason for thanking Him, "that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare." Let us be aware that God is nigh to us, alike when He seems to withdraw his hand, and when He is perceived to use it in his servant's cause; alike when He helps, and when He leaves us to ourselves, when He grants our prayers, or refuses them.

Next let us consider that we hear in this psalm the holy purposes formed by Hezekiah, for the government of the people committed to his charge. He felt that the whole land and all its inhabitants were in confusion. He was aware that the Lord had laid on him a heavy responsibility, even to bear up the pillars of

his country. He resolved that he would judge uprightly. To the foolish, and proud, and wicked, he would hold the language of reproof and discouragement. He would endeavour to teach those who trusted in their greatness, that God is the true source of all power and all honour. It is to God that men ought to look, as putting down the mighty from their seat, and exalting the lowly and meek. The Lord, they ought to know, holds in his hand a cup of affliction, out of which whilst He pours to every one his portion, He gives the dregs to "all the wicked of the earth," to "wring them out and drink them."

Thus we learn that kings, and all who are in authority under them, ought to refer all their power to the God who gives it. They ought constantly to own that it is in virtue of his authority that they rule. And whilst they praise Him for all the uses and glory of good government, they ought to watch that they punish and reward, cut off or exalt, in accordance with the rules which He has revealed, for distinguishing between the wicked and the good. And further, if we may consider the reign of the good king here spoken of, to be a type of the reign of Christ, we may take these words as a description of Christ's kingdom. We may view them as an assurance, that when He shall have gathered all mankind into one assembly, He will judge the world in righteousness, and that in that day He will disgrace the proud and boastful, as well as promote the faithful, devout, and humble, to great gain and glory.

Very terrible is the description of the wrath of God, to be fulfilled in that day, as here set before us under the image of a cup. Wine is sometimes used in Scripture as a figure of the rich blessings of the Gospel. See Is. 25. 6. Here however we are to think not of its salutary effects, when taken in moderation for health's sake, but of its intoxicating qualities, when being taken in excess it becomes poison both to body and to soul. Then it aptly signifies woe and dismay, fear and trembling, and the agony of horrors unspeakable, which God will pour out even unto the dregs, to be the everlasting portion of the wicked. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture." That is to say, it is naturally a strong wine, and it is so mixt with other kinds of wine as to be still stronger. "And he poureth out of the same." And what is it that is poured out? Tribulation, and anguish, and woe. The guests perhaps presumptuously expect a feast of good things; forgetting that their iniquities have provoked evil things. But that cup must be tasted even by those of us, who may seem to have provoked it the least. For the best of men it is good that they should be afflicted for a time. But for the worst is it ordained that they must be afflicted for ever. The dregs of that cup are theirs. Or, as is written in another psalm, "Upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be their portion to drink." Ps. 11. 7.



*The psalmist praiseth God for delivering his people.*

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song of Asaph.

- 1 In Judah *is* God known : thy sight when once thou art  
his name *is* great in Israel.      angry ?
- 2 In Salem also is his taber-      8 Thou didst cause judg-  
nacle, and his dwelling place in      ment to be heard from heaven ;  
Zion.      the earth feared, and was  
3 There brake he the arrows      still,  
of the bow, the shield, and the      9 When God arose to judg-  
sword, and the battle. Selah.      ment, to save all the meek of  
4 Thou *art* more glorious *and*      the earth. Selah.  
excellent than the mountains of      10 Surely the wrath of man  
prey.      shall praise thee : the remain-  
5 The stouthearted are spoiled,      der of wrath shalt thou restrain.  
they have slept their sleep :      11 Vow, and pay unto the  
and none of the men of might      LORD your God : let all that  
have found their hands.      be round about him bring pre-  
6 At thy rebuke, O God of      sents unto him that ought to  
Jacob, both the chariot and      be feared.  
horse are cast into a dead sleep.      12 He shall cut off the spirit  
7 Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be      of princes : *he is* terrible to the  
feared : and who may stand in      kings of the earth.

## LECTURE 916.

*How God is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

In the nineteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings we have an account of the miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib. There is little doubt that the psalm before us relates to this signal discomfiture of the enemies of the Lord's people. It begins with declaring the privilege enjoyed by the Israelites, the privilege of knowing and honouring the true God. It then describes the interference of God in destroying the host of the Assyrians. And lastly, it points out the duty of praising, and honouring, and obeying, this great God and Lord of all.

The privilege of Judah and of Israel was this, that in them was the true God known, and his name held in honour. And especially in Jerusalem, at mount Sion was his temple, which was in the place of his tabernacle, as the house in which He manifested his presence and accepted the sacrifices of his people. This was the land, and these the people, in behalf of which He was used to interpose the power of his almighty arm, and to make the weapons of their adversaries of none effect. These were the honours, the honour of knowing and of serving God, which made the hill of Zion more glorious and excellent than the nations, and cities, and fortresses, which were devoted not to God's service, but to the usual objects of worldly warfare, the spoiling of the weak by the strong. May we remember this, when we reflect with satisfaction on the eminence attained by our own nation,

not only in the achievements of war, but also in the arts and acquisitions of peace. It is "righteousness" that "exalteth a nation;" not the abundance of the wealth which it has acquired, not the splendour of its palaces, nor the skill of its inhabitants in ministering to the comforts and luxuries of life, not these things any more than the number of their victories; but their knowledge of God, and their devotion to his service. "But sin is a reproach to any people." Prov. 14. 34. No victories we have ever gained, no wealth we can ever amass, will wipe out the stain of our reproach, if either by reason of rapine in war, or of extortion or fraud in commerce, our land deserves to be called "mountains of prey."

And see how the Almighty himself fights in behalf of those who put their trust in Him. "The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands." They slept the sleep of death, as we learn from the history. It was by the stroke of the angel of the Lord, as we read there. Or as it is here expressed, "At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep;" that is to say, both they who fought in chariots, and they who fought on horseback. Terrible indeed must God be in his wrath, at whose rebuke so many thousands were cut off at once. When his judgments were so plainly manifested from heaven, who could fail to stand in awe, who of all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth? When the fierce Sennacherib was thus humbled by God's power, before the meek and pious Hezekiah, surely the most haughty of princes must feel that God ought to be feared by them no less than by the least of their subjects.

"Vow," then, we would say to them, and unto all men, "vow, and pay unto the Lord your God: let all that are round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared." No worldly greatness can in the least degree exempt you from the duty of honouring and obeying God. The highest are as much within his reach as the lowest. He can constrain the wrath of the most furious to minister to his glory, as surely as the submission of the meek. He can arrest the progress of the most successful conqueror, and in the midst of his victorious career, strew the ground with the dead corpses of his host, and send him back with shame to his own land. And if God be thus terrible even here, to those who in the lust of conquest invade the dominions of their neighbours, how much more when He comes to call them to account, for the blood which they have shed upon the earth! Oh that Christian princes may remember their Christian vow; to be soldiers and servants of the prince of peace! Oh that both they, and all their subjects, may unite to offer unto God that gift, which we know to be good and acceptable in his sight, namely, to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty!" 1 Tim. 2. 2.

*The psalmist mourneth, prayeth, and findeth comfort.*

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 I cried unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.
- 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the LORD: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.
- 3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.
- 4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
- 5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.
- 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.
- 7 Will the LORD cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?
- 8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
- 9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.
- 10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most high.
- 11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.
- 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.
- 13 Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary: who *is so* great a God as *our* God!
- 14 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou *hast* declared thy strength among the people.
- 15 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.
- 16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.
- 17 The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.
- 18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.
- 19 Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.
- 20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

## LECTURE 917.

*Of taking comfort from the remembrance of God's mercies.*

We have here the lamentation of an afflicted soul, and the remedy of affliction found in a due consideration of God's goodness. The affliction of the psalmist appears to have arisen from some calamity that had fallen upon the church, as by the public sanction of idolatry, or by the open profanation of the temple, or



by the carrying away of the people into captivity. Loud and repeated was the cry of grief which he uttered. But it was "unto God" that he cried, and God "gave ear" unto his prayer. No wonder that he found the way of comfort in his trouble; and learnt how to turn his fears into confidence, his mourning into joy. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." This is the psalmist's account of the path to peace. And his description of his grief is this, "my sore ran in the night, and ceased not," or rather, as it is translated in the margin, my "hand" ran, it was wet with my tears, "my soul refused to be comforted." Alas! which of us ever feel griefs like this, when the house of God is dishonoured, his people persecuted, or his services displaced by the abominations of idolatry? Which of us, on searching our own memories, could testify unto God, that we have ever out of grief on his account shed so much as a single tear?

Even the remembrance of God at the first only added to the trouble of the psalmist. Regret at having lost the favour of One, who was once so gracious, now overwhelmed his soul. This robbed him of his sleep, deprived him of his speech, and agitated his mind with such anxious questions as these, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" And certainly, if by reason of our sins God should at any time see fit to hide away his face from us, the remembrance of the joy which we had heretofore experienced, in the light of his countenance, would embitter by a most painful contrast, the misery of fearing lest He should have forsaken us.

But there is another view of God's past mercies, which his grace can enable us to take to our unspeakable comfort. We may think of them as tokens and pledges of mercies yet to come. And it is our infirmity, the weakness of our faith, that hinders us, if we cannot take this favourable view of them. How mercifully was the psalmist enabled to make this reflexion in the midst of his despondency, and to derive consolation from the very same recollections which had before added to his pain! How beautifully, under the influence of these thankful feelings, does he describe God's chief mercies to Israel of old! How profitably does he meditate on them for himself! How instructively does he set them forth before us! We seem to see the very wonders here described, the glory resting in the holy place, the waters parting to make a pathway for the people, and the people led gently, like a flock of sheep, by the same almighty hand which dealt so terribly with their enemies. We are left to draw the conclusion for ourselves. And we can be at no loss to argue thus: The Lord is full of compassion to those whom He has chosen to be his people; and as He has already mightily delivered them, He will continue, unless it be their own fault, to deliver them mightily ever after.

*The psalmist exhorteth to the shewing forth of God's works.*

Maschil of Asaph.

- 1 Give ear, O my people, *to* my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
- 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:
- 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.
- 4 We will not hide *them* from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.
- 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:
- 6 That the generation to come might know *them*, even the children *which* should be born; *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children:
- 7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:
- 8 And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.
- 9 The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, *and* carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.
- 10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;
- 11 And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.
- 12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.
- 13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap.
- 14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.
- 15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.
- 16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

## LECTURE 918.

*That parents must instruct their children in the truth.*

We are informed in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, that Jesus spake unto the multitude in parables, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables." Matt. 13. 35. We readily understand the application of this name to many of our Lord's discourses. But how is the psalm before us a parable? Why does the psalmist speak of uttering a dark saying, when the psalm is one of the most easy to be understood in the whole book. Perhaps

he points to the darkness in the hearts of the people, and signifies that they were slow of heart to understand the moral instruction which he was about to dwell upon. Let us pray that these matters may be familiar to our hearts as well as plain to our understandings. Let us endeavour to incline the senses of our souls to the instruction which God has here set forth before us.

And first let us observe, how forcibly the duty of transmitting the knowledge of true religion from father to son is here inculcated. If there ever was a time when men learned the truths by revelation direct from God, there never ought to have been a single generation from that time to the present, which has not been instructed aright by those which came before it, and which has not aright instructed those who have come after it. And this method of transmitting true religion, by parental teaching and authority, is to last to the end of time; and is a most important means of preserving it in the world, in aid of the written word, and of the ordained ministry. Let every father do his best to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let him teach them all that he knows aright, and warn them to avoid all that he is aware of having done wrong. Let them have the benefit, as far as possible, of his experience, without the risk of his temptations, and the pain of his regrets. All that he can do for them, by teaching, exhorting, warning, and reproving, will not be more than needful to prevent them from falling into the sins, and suffering the sorrows, of those who have gone before them.

This, the psalmist tells us, was the design of God, in ordaining that parents should thus teach their children after them continually; see Deut. 4. 9; 6. 7; 11. 19; it was not only that the children might know God's will, but also that they might avoid the transgressions of their forefathers. And with this view he begins to mention some of the chief of these transgressions; namely, want of faith in God, that He would surely give them victory, and neglecting to keep God's covenant, and refusing to walk in his law, a forgetting God's works and his wonders that He had shewed them. And thus the mention of some of the chief of those mighty works is introduced; those which were done in Egypt, and those which were done in the passage of the people out of Egypt. Now St. Paul has told us, that these things, which befel the Israelites, were for examples unto us. Let not us therefore forget these wondrous works of God. Let us delight to hear of them, to read of them, to think of them. And let us never be weary of regarding them as proofs of God's goodness and of man's unworthiness, and as motives strongly urging us to become, as far as possible, less unworthy of his goodness than we are.



*The psalmist rehearseth the sins of the Israelites.*

17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most high in the wilderness.

18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.

27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:

28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about

their habitations.

29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;

30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,

31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God.

35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37 For their heart *was* not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

## LECTURE 919.

*Our joy in the tidings of the compassion of the Lord.*

What a melancholy history of repeated backslidings is here most forcibly set before us! And how plainly do our con-

sciences testify to its truth, as a description of the waywardness of the human heart! After manifold mercies received, "they sinned yet more." "They tempted God in their heart." For He sees the lusts which are there cherished. Our yet unuttered wishes and intentions are not concealed from Him. But besides this, "they spake against God;" they murmured with their lips. And his wrath was kindled against them because of these proofs that they "believed not" in Him, and trusted not "in his salvation." No words which we can utter, no thoughts which we can harbour in our hearts, are more apt to provoke the anger of the Lord, than those which arise from doubt of his ability and willingness to save all that come unto Him to be saved.

What? has He not given us bread from heaven? For does not our Lord thus tell us of Himself, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven?" John 6. 51. And in giving his Son for us, to be our Saviour, to die in our behalf, has He not given us the most plain and most affecting proof, that He is willing to give us all things, and to do for us all things which can be well for Him to do, that we may be saved? But alas we are apt, like the Israelites of old, to make but light account of that which God bestows, and to long for that which He withholds. Oh never may He deal to us the judgment which He so fearfully dealt to them, in giving them their hearts' desire, and then overtaking them with the messenger of death, "while their meat was yet in their mouths!"

Strange that they, for all this, should still sin, still disbelieve! Strange that though "when he slew them, then they sought him," yet they were not stedfast in his covenant, for their heart was not right with Him; so that all their professions of repentance for the past, and of trust for the future, proved to be only flattery and falsehood! Strange we think it, and abominable ingratitude in them. God grant that we have no occasion to confess to like gross forgetfulness of all his love! God forbid that we should think hard thoughts of others, when we have so much reason to feel, that we have nothing to depend on but his mercy for ourselves! No, instead of grudging Israel their many undeserved escapes, let us rejoice to observe in their history how full God is of compassion, how ready to forgive iniquity rather than to destroy, and to turn away his anger instead of stirring up all his wrath. Well we must know, that if He were extreme to mark what is done amiss, we for our parts could not escape. And thankful we may feel to be here assured, that He remembers that we are but flesh, and that He considers in his dealings with our souls both the weakness of our nature, and the shortness of our time. Oh may He give us grace whilst here to subdue the flesh unto the spirit! Oh may He forgive us our many sins, negligences, and ignorances, before we are called away from hence, and have no more opportunity to repent!

*The psalmist rehearseth further the sin of Israel.*

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert!

41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

42 They remembered not his hand, *nor* the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan:

44 And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.

45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.

46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.

47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.

48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.

49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels *among them*.

50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;

51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, *even to* this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

## LECTURE 920.

*The sin of soon forgetting the loving kindness of God.*

No one probably ever tried to do good, in the way of giving good advice and godly admonition, without feeling the difficulty of doing so without risk of offending the party advised. So hard is it to temper unwelcome truth with the manifestation of kind regard! In this respect we cannot but admire the tenderness of affection, which throughout this psalm is so happily united with the faithfulness of expostulation. We feel, as we read it, that it must have been written by one whose "heart's desire and prayer," was like St. Paul's, for Israel, "that they might be saved." Rom. 10. 1. And as we perceive that the admonition applies all along to our own backslidings, we find ourselves only so much the more inclined to thank the friendly hand, which put it on record for our good. And no wonder; for whoever might be the writer of the psalm, he wrote as he was moved by God's Spirit. And we own both the faithfulness of the reproof, and the kindness of



the tone in which it is given, to Him who loved us so greatly as to give his Son to be our Saviour.

Nothing certainly is more fit to make us sensible of the long-suffering of the Lord, than his repeated acts of kindness to the Israelites, after the many, and gross instances of wilfulness, of which they were guilty in the wilderness. As we read the history, we can scarcely believe that they could so soon forget the miracles of mercy, which God had so lately wrought in their behalf; mercy to them, but destruction of their enemies. And yet they would fain have turned back to that very Egypt, which God had visited so severely for their sakes. Already they had forgotten all the plagues which had been inflicted on their enemies, or had forgotten that they were inflicted by God for their sakes. Yet in the midst of their forgetfulness and unthankfulness, God was pleased to continue to protect them. He gave them light when their enemies had darkness, life when they had death. He who sent "evil angels" among the Egyptians, to be the ministers of anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, "made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not." He gave them both safety, and the sense of it. And notwithstanding their many provocations in the wilderness, so soon after all these mercies received, yet did God continue to be gracious to their children. For He brought them safe unto the promised land, then cast out the heathen before them, and gave to them therein each a portion for his own, and for the inheritance of their children after them.

It was undoubtedly an aggravating circumstance in their forgetfulness of God, that they forgot his wondrous works so soon after He had wrought them. But faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, makes all things nigh to us in point of time. And if we are now forgetful of these same miracles, or of those which God wrought in our behalf by his blessed Son dying on the cross, how soon have we forgotten them! how soon after Christ has finished the work of our salvation have we been guilty of neglecting it! hundreds of years, what are they to a being born for immortality? Let us think of the birth, the life, the death of Christ, of his resurrection, and ascension, as if they had happened within the memory of man, as if we had ourselves witnessed them. If we cannot bring them thus close home to us in thought, we are wanting in liveliness of faith. If we can, and do thus think of them, as having lately taken place, and then act in forgetfulness of that love of God, which these things manifest unto us, how soon have we forgotten that love! how much the more offensive is our sin, how much the more terrible will be our condemnation!

*The psalmist in conclusion dwelleth on God's goodness.*

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:

60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men;

61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.

62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance.

63 The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage.

64 Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made

no lamentation.

65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder part: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established for ever.

70 He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds:

71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

## LECTURE 921.

*The troubles of the church ending in peace.*

What could have been done more for the children of Israel, than God had graciously done for them, in bringing them out with triumph from their bondage in Egypt, and establishing them in the land of Canaan, not only in the enjoyment of peace and plenty, but in the possession of statutes and ordinances, revealed from heaven for their guidance, in all things pertaining both to this life and to the life which is to come? What can be more disappointing than to find them, as we read their history, so much inclined to make to themselves graven images, and so soon neglectful of many of the most important regulations of the Law, relating to the service of almighty God? In vain had He warned them that the Lord their God was a jealous God; they dared notwithstanding to give his glory to them that were no gods. And He in consequence forsook his tabernacle, suffered the ark to fall into the hands of the Philistines, and gave both the people

and the priests to be a prey unto their enemies. And to so low a condition were they brought, that it seemed as if the Lord their God gave no more heed to them than one that slept. And when at length He turned his hand against those who slew them, and overthrew those who were both their enemies and his, it was like one awaking out of sleep. And as is the voice of "a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine," when refreshed and strengthened by the proper use of it, such was the force and vehemence with which the Lord at length once more interposed in his people's cause, and enabled them to put their adversaries to a disgraceful flight. Then came the sin of the people in wishing and asking to have a king. And then once more did God forgive them, and shew Himself gracious unto them, and overrule this their evil conduct for good, making it the occasion, after Saul's rejection, of bringing in David to be king; David who was a wise and upright ruler of his people, and also a type of the great King and Shepherd of all true Israelites in all ages and nations of the world.

And here this instructive psalm concludes, without mentioning the further sins of Israel, either in rebelling against David, or in falling away yet more thoroughly from Jehovah unto idols after David's time. Hence some have thought that David was himself the writer of the psalm, and others that it was written by the Asaph who lived in David's reign. But even if it were written by another Asaph long afterwards, it might be not without a gracious purpose that the psalm, after describing so many instances of mercifulness abused, and of anger poured out, closes with this pleasing description of mercy enjoyed with thankfulness, in peace, and prosperity. Let us for our parts see here an intimation, that such will be the conclusion of the history of the church, after its many errors and divisions, its periods of idolatry, and almost infidelity, after the frequent suspension of the blessings which God has so largely given it, still its end will be the reign of Christ in peace, and the prospering of his people in godliness. And let us also view this circumstance as representing unto us that which we may hope will be our own end. Wayward and wilful as we have often been, God has been longsuffering, and ready to forgive. He is so now. He will be so still. And at the end of our pilgrimage, it will be found true of us, we trust, that the King whom God has chosen is reigning in our hearts, even his own blessed Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



*The psalmist lamenteth the desolation of Jerusalem.*

A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 O God, the heathen are place.  
 come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
- 2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
- 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none to bury them.
- 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
- 5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.
- 7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.
- 8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.
- 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight *by* the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is* shed.
- 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;
- 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O LORD.
- 13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

## LECTURE 922.

*The desolations of the Christian Church.*

There can be no doubt that this psalm was composed after the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon. It is evidently a pathetic song of sacred sorrow for that grievous visitation. And we cannot but sympathise with the grief of the afflicted Israelites, when suffering the penalty of their past disobedience as captives in the territories of the heathen. Nor will this circumstance, that they brought their trouble on themselves, make us less apt to feel for their affliction. For this, we are aware, is no less true of all the sorrows and sufferings to which we ourselves are liable. Our sins withhold good things from us, and expose us to receiving evil things. And if there were really any such thing, in this world of God's making, as pain which is not upon the whole deserved, we could not have that sympathy or common feeling with the sufferer which we have for merited chastisements.

It is painful to reflect, that this richly deserved calamity which befel the Israelites of old, has had its parallel, or something very like one, in the desolation of a great part of Christendom, by the victorious arms of the Mahometans. These fierce unbelievers have long occupied a large portion of the inheritance of Christ, including both Jerusalem, and all the other chief places in the east, from which the light of the Gospel at first went forth, to shine over the whole earth. There they have shed blood to a degree that no other people ever did. There they have made the name of Christian a reproach, and set up the name of their pretended prophet above that of our Saviour Christ. And there also, we have ample reason to reflect with shame, it was the wickedness of the Christians, their covetousness, ambition, sensuality, strife, and perhaps above all their inclination for idolatry, which drew down upon those desolated churches the dreadful judgments of the Lord.

And what must we say of that portion of the world which still bears the name of Christendom? Has not a large portion hereof long laboured under the usurpation of a tyranny, which spares neither body nor soul; a power, which not only sheds blood profusely, but also commits its victims alive to the flames, and which at the same time is bent upon enslaving men's souls in the bonds of ignorance, yea destroying them, if it be possible, by the practices of idolatry? And oh, what a provocation of this woe also have the sins of Christians been! How has it grown up as it were from the roots of our own sloth, sensuality, and servile superstition! And how many of its baneful influences has it left at work, even amongst those who have sincerely endeavoured to cast it out root and branch! Let us earnestly pray to God, with the psalmist, that He for his own glory's sake will both "purge away our sins," and also set free his church, alike in the east and in the west, from the yoke of its merciless oppressors. That so they who are his people, and the sheep of his pasture, may be multiplied in all lands, and may shew forth his praises throughout all generations.

Heavenly Father, who hast purchased to Thyself an universal church by the blood of thy dear Son, deliver it, we beseech Thee, in all its parts, from all ignorance, from all oppression, and above all, from the bondage of iniquity, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The psalmist deplores the wasting of God's people.*

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth, A Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.
- 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us.
- 3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.
- 4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
- 5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.
- 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.
- 7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.
- 8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
- 9 Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.
- 10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.
- 11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.
- 12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
- 13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.
- 14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;
- 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.
- 16 *It is* burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
- 17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.
- 18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.
- 19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

## LECTURE 923.

*Of trusting in the efficacy of God's gracious favour.*

When Hezekiah had re-established the true religion in Jerusalem, all the Israelites that were present went out, as we read in the Second Book of Chronicles, "and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all." 2 Chron. 31. 1. This good king had previously sent a letter to the remnant of the kingdom of Israel, that had escaped out of the hand of the king of Assyria, urging them to "turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel." 2 Chron. 30. 6. It is highly



probable that the psalm before us relates to this occasion. For the tribes mentioned in the psalm and in the history are the same; as well as the expression "turn again." And the particulars of this beautiful similitude of a vine correspond with the condition of the land of Israel, when partly but not wholly desolate.

It is to be supposed that the remnant which the Assyrians had left consisted chiefly of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. To these therefore the psalmist directs his thoughts; and addressing God as the Shepherd of Israel, speaks especially of his leading "Joseph like a flock," and begs Him to stir up his strength before the face of Joseph's sons. He has faith to trust, that if God would but restore them, and shew the light of his countenance, all the tribes might yet be saved, and the nation might once more be whole. Thus he trusts, and thus again he prays, even though they had now tears for food, and for neighbours enemies who laughed them to scorn. And in order that he may plead the more effectually, he points out, under the similitude of a vine, how graciously God had planted his people in the promised land, and how largely He had multiplied and prospered them there; and then adverting to their desolate condition, when they were become the prey of all them that went by, he appeals to God to look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine of his own planting, and beseeches Him to let the hand of his power rest upon the people of his own choosing, the man of his right hand, and the son of man whom He made strong for Himself. Then the psalmist trusts that the people would not again fall away from God; but that quickened, or made alive, by God's favour, they would ever after worship only Him. And the psalm is concluded with a repeated utterance of prayer for God to cause his face to shine, and with a renewed expression of trust that then all would be well. A happy holy confidence, which we have no less need to exercise, a confidence in God's protecting power; a trust in Him, that if He but vouchsafe to cause his face to shine on us, our church, thus renewed in vigour, would spread through all the length and breadth of the land; our Christian faith, then nourished with Christian unity and love, would reach unto all the ends of the earth. Let us trust that it would be so. Let us pray that it may be so, to the honour of God's most holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The psalmist telleth of God's willingness to be gracious.*To the chief Musician upon Gittith, *A Psalm of Asaph.*

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| <p>1 Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.</p> <p>2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.</p> <p>3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.</p> <p>4 For this <i>was</i> a statute for Israel, <i>and</i> a law of the God of Jacob.</p> <p>5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.</p> <p>6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.</p> <p>7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.</p> <p>8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;</p> | <p>9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.</p> <p>10 I <i>am</i> the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.</p> <p>11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.</p> <p>12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: <i>and</i> they walked in their own counsels.</p> <p>13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, <i>and</i> Israel had walked in my ways!</p> <p>14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.</p> <p>15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.</p> <p>16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.</p> |
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## LECTURE 924.

*The privilege of praising God every day.*

The psalmist here first calls upon the people to praise God, with singing and with the sound of instruments of music; and then speaking to them in the name of God, sets forth how much God had already done for them, and how much more He had been willing to do for them, but for their own want of faith and love. "I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots." Here God reminds the Israelites, that He had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Next He tells them of his speaking to them out of "the secret place of thunder," and of his proving them "at the waters of Meribah;" and especially of the signal privilege conferred on them, that they had been taught to know the living and true God, and had been commanded to worship only Him. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." This was the tenour of God's

promise to them under the Law, provided they would hearken and obey; a land flowing with milk and honey, plenty for the supply of all their wants, and peace under the protecting arm of the Most High. And like to this is the tenour of God's promises to us in the Gospel; grace sufficient for the nourishing of the soul, and peace with Him through Christ for ever.

"But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." Most awful charge, for almighty God to have to bring against his creature man! Oh never may the words in any sense be true of us! "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels." Most miserable case, most justly deserved punishment of grievous sin! Oh, whatsoever chastisement God thinks fit to lay on us, may it never be our sentence to be given up to the lusts of our own hearts! may we never be deserted by God's guidance, and left to walk in our own counsels! That which He was willing to do for his ancient people, we may well believe that He is willing to do for us. Would we but walk in his ways, what enemies need we fear? what blessings should we ever want? Our own hearts' lusts, those dreadful foes to our eternal peace, would soon be subdued unto us. The people too which know not God, and they which know Him no better than to be at enmity with Him, won by the effect of true Christian practice in those who make profession of Christianity, would submit themselves in multitudes to the power of the truth, when thus proved to be effectual to convert the soul.

Such great things is God still desirous to do for us, if we were a people willing in the day of his power. So affectionately does He plead with us for our own good, and mourn over us when we fail to hearken unto Him to our own unutterable loss. Shall we not then obey the exhortation of the psalmist, and sing aloud unto God our strength? Shall we not gladly hallow the days ordained for us in the statutes of our church, to celebrate the great things which God has done for Christians? Yes; we will do our best, O Lord, to make the sound of thy praise to be heard. And though we have no days appointed us in the Gospel, as thy people of old had in the Law, nor any like ceremonial observances, each ordained for its proper day, we would so much the more desire to prove, that we know how to use the liberty which Thou hast given us, by laying on ourselves the obligation, or rather taking to ourselves the privilege, of serving Thee, as our Church directs us, with prayers and praises every day.



*The psalmist exhorteth and warneth them that bear rule.*

A Psalm of Asaph.

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| <p>1 God standeth in the congregation of the mighty ; he judgeth among the gods.</p> <p>2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked ? Selah.</p> <p>3 Defend the poor and fatherless : do justice to the afflicted and needy.</p> <p>4 Deliver the poor and needy : rid <i>them</i> out of the hand of the wicked.</p> | <p>5 They know not, neither will they understand ; they walk on in darkness : all the foundations of the earth are out of course.</p> <p>6 I have said, Ye <i>are</i> gods : and all of you <i>are</i> children of the most high.</p> <p>7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.</p> <p>8 Arise, O God, judge the earth : for thou shalt inherit all nations.</p> |
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### LECTURE 925.

*The responsibility of judging fairly and uprightly.*

There is a great resemblance between the solemn charge, which the psalmist here gives to magistrates in God's name, and that which Jehoshaphat gave to the judges whom he set up throughout all the cities of Judah. For thus run his instructions : "Take heed what ye do : for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you ; take heed and do it : for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." 2 Chron. 19. 6, 7. Many have hence argued that this psalm must have been written in the reign of Jehoshaphat. But there is at least equal reason to suppose, that it relates to the times of Hezekiah. For we know that this good king took no common pains in restoring all the ordinances of the Law. And we find from the words of Isaiah, who lived in the reign of Hezekiah, that there was at that period great need for such a charge as this to be given to those who bare rule in the land. "Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves," says the prophet, in his first chapter : "every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards : they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." Is. 1. 23.

But in whichever reign this psalm was written, and to whatsoever period it originally applied, it contains warnings and exhortations, most needful and profitable to all who bear rule in all ages of the world. It tells them that however mighty they be, and however strongly supported by each other, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty ;" He is as a Judge and Ruler among them, who are themselves among men as "*gods*." It warns them therefore not to persist in judging "*unjustly*," nor in shewing favour to "*the wicked*." It bids them uphold the cause

of "the poor and fatherless," and "do justice to the afflicted and needy." It exhorts them to "deliver" such as cannot help themselves, and "rid them out of the hand of the wicked." It reproves them for want of knowledge and understanding in persisting to judge otherwise. And it describes the effects of such perverted judgments on the fabric of society to be as though "all the foundations of the earth" were "out of course." It reminds them that though they have been above spoken of as "gods," or "children of the most high," yet they must die like other men, and as other princes have done before them. And finally, it reminds them that they themselves must answer unto God the Judge of all the earth; it reminds them of this, by the expression of a devout prayer, that God would please to arise and do this thing, that He would take into his hands the judgment of all the earth, the inheritance of the throne of all the nations thereof.

But of what use, it may be asked, are these words of exhortation, to the great multitude of mankind; who instead of ruling, are subject to those who rule; who instead of judging, apply to others for judgment? We answer, that these words are very useful to us all, because the peace and prosperity of all of us depend largely under God on the uprightness of our rulers; and therefore it is profitable for us, that these solemn warnings should stand recorded in God's word for their instruction and reproof. Further, it is well for us also to read them, and to study them, in order that we may not suppose, as many wrongfully have done, that religion is the abettor of oppression; but that we may be able to say to those who think thus meanly of God's word, see the warnings here set forth against all oppressive disposition in the great; see the pains here taken for securing the poor from their oppressors. And further, the exhortations of this psalm are profitable to all of us, for this reason, that we have all of us more or less of opportunity to join, either in oppression, or in protecting the oppressed, either in wronging others, or in righting them that are wronged. The laws of our country call on many amongst us to take part in deciding questions which are tried before a judge. And even they who neither act as judge or jury may form and express opinions, on the conduct and concerns of their neighbours, calculated either to wrong them greatly, or to redress their wrongs considerably. The prejudice of a whole neighbourhood against a man may be the height of injustice; or the sympathy of a whole neighbourhood with him, may make him the best amends under wrong. Let us then severally remember, that "God standeth in the congregation" of the poor, no less than in that of "the mighty;" and that we are all bound in our respective stations, as far as our influence can reach, to judge according unto right.

*The psalmist prayeth against the enemies of God.*

A Song or Psalm of Asaph.

- 1 Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
- 2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
- 3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.
- 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
- 5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:
- 6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes;
- 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;
- 8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. *Selah.*
- 9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:
- 10 *Which* perished at En-dor: they became *as* dung for the earth.
- 11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:
- 12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.
- 13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.
- 14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;
- 15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.
- 16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.
- 17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
- 18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, *art* the most high over all the earth.

## LECTURE 926.

*A warning against enmity to God's people.*

One of the important objects, for which the Israelites were established in national prosperity, was that they might not only preserve amongst themselves the knowledge of the true God, but might also be a standing demonstration of his divine majesty to all the other nations of the earth. Their signal prosperity, and their miraculous success against their enemies, as long as they were faithful to the worship of Jehovah, must have been instructive circumstances to the heathen round about them; who were apt to attribute any advantages which they gained over each other, to the superior might of their own particular divinities. But instead



of concluding hence, as they ought to have done, that the God of Israel was superior in might and majesty to those whom they esteemed gods, they were filled with rage in their hearts against the Israelites; their pride in their own idols being mortified; and they were continually renewing with the people of the Lord a contest, which must have always led to their defeat, had not the Lord's own people been themselves defiled with idolatry.

It was under the apprehension of one of these fierce assaults, that the psalm before us was written. It seems that several of these heathen nations had combined together, forgetting their own differences, in order to make common cause against the people and the church of God; like Herod and Pontius Pilate in aftertimes becoming friends over the crucifixion of Christ. What a fearful consideration does this fact present to those, who out of enmity to our own beloved church, have sunk differences amongst each other in many cases greater than those which they have with us, in order to be confederate against us, to cut us off, if it be possible, from being any longer a national church! What a painful reflexion must it be to us, that as it was for the sins of Israel that God at length gave up his people for a prey unto their enemies, so it is unquestionably true, that our sins, both national and individual, have deserved no less than this at the hands of God, that we should be a national church no longer!

But let us hope that God will not prove extreme to mark that which has been done amiss. Let us with the psalmist refer to God's past mercies to us, as encouraging us to hope, and emboldening us to pray, that He will again mightily deliver us. Let us beseech Him to do so, for his own name's sake, in order that men may know how mightily He is able to uphold his own institutions, even when through the frailty of the men to whom He gives them they have become ready to perish. And as we read the fearful imprecations, here set forth by God's authority, let us take warning for ourselves, lest we ever be numbered amongst God's enemies, by reason of our hating those who are God's people. There must be many whom we ought to regard as such, amongst the members of communions now arrayed against our own. Whilst we contend earnestly for the truth, and steadfastly adhere to the church, and faithfully warn those who oppose it of their dangerous error, let us so much the more closely watch, that we cherish in our hearts love for all men. And let us especially be disposed to love constantly and dearly "all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Eph. 6. 24.

O God, if we be indeed thy people, let us have the heart to love all them that are thine, all them that love Thee, all them that love thy ever blessed Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

*The psalmist expresseth desire for God's house.*

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

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| <p>1 How amiable <i>are</i> thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts !</p> <p>2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.</p> <p>3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, <i>even</i> thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.</p> <p>4 Blessed <i>are</i> they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.</p> <p>5 Blessed <i>is</i> the man whose strength <i>is</i> in thee; in whose heart <i>are</i> the ways of <i>them</i>.</p> <p>6 <i>Who</i> passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.</p> | <p>7 They go from strength to strength, <i>every one of them</i> in Zion appeareth before God.</p> <p>8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.</p> <p>9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.</p> <p>10 For a day in thy courts <i>is</i> better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.</p> <p>11 For the LORD God <i>is</i> a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good <i>thing</i> will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.</p> <p>12 O LORD of hosts, <i>blessed is</i> the man that trusteth in thee.</p> |
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## LECTURE 927.

*The blessedness of them that devoutly worship God.*

Happy is the man who can agree with the psalmist in loving the courts of the Lord's house, and in esteeming one day spent there better than a thousand otherwise employed ! Happy he, who lives in such a constant sense of the divine presence, as renders every place God's temple, and makes Him to be felt as a sun to cheer the soul, and as a shield to defend it, whether in his house, or out of it, whether in the depth of solitude, or in the full concourse of society ! Who but He can guard us in the multitude of dangers which surround us ? Who but God can protect our life, the everlasting life of the soul, from the fiery darts of the wicked one ? Who but God can say to the darkness of ignorance and sin, Let there be light, and there is light ? Warmth also as well as light comes from that one Source and Centre of all that is good ; warmth melting the cold affections of our stony hearts, and ripening in the barren wilderness of this fallen world the heavenly fruits of holiness and joy.

Whilst, however, we hold that everywhere this sunshine of the soul is to be felt, provided no dark cloud of passion or unfaithfulness is interposed on our parts, we have good reason to apply what is written in this psalm, of God's worship in his sanctuary

of old, to the love and joy and glory which are kindled in the soul by partaking in the worship of a Christian congregation. The world in which at other times it is our duty to intermingle, the world and all its cares and pleasures are thence shut out. No violence is likely to intrude itself, no strife, oppression, insolence, or wrong, is likely to take place within those hallowed walls. There the time is occupied in confession of sin, in presenting unto God, through Christ, the offering of prayer and praise, in hearing God's most holy word, and in glorifying Christ, by thankfully commemorating his precious death, and renewing our communion with Him and with each other in the sacrament of his body and blood. And though we do indeed there feel ourselves most deeply humbled by the recollection of our manifold transgressions, yet have we no sooner confessed our sins than we are assured of God's willingness to forgive, and are encouraged to draw nigh to Him in prayer and praise, as to a Father who has forgiven us.

Oh, how amiable then are the services of the church! How much to be beloved and longed for are the courts of our Christian temples! How naturally may we count happy even the birds that build their nests within those consecrated walls! How infinitely more happy the reasonable and immortal beings, who delight in resorting thither, to worship God with the spirit and with the understanding! Blessed indeed is he whose strength is sought of God in prayer, whose source of refreshment in this vale of misery is divine worship; whose course of life is a progress in holiness, a going on from strength to strength, into a fitness for dwelling with God for ever in Jerusalem which is above. May God incline our hearts to pray to Him continually! May He graciously hear us when we pray! May He accept our prayers for Christ's sake, looking not on us but on the face of his Anointed! And whether we are privileged or not to minister in his house of prayer, may we find Him both there and everywhere to be unto our souls a Sun and Shield, the Author and Giver of all good things, the sole object of our confidence, and the never failing fountain of our joy!



*The psalmist declareth the union of mercy and truth.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 LORD, thou hast been favour-<br>able unto thy land: thou hast<br>brought back the captivity of<br>Jacob.         | and grant us thy salvation.<br>8 I will hear what God the<br>LORD will speak: for he will<br>speak peace unto his people,<br>and to his saints: but let them<br>not turn again to folly. |
| 2 Thou hast forgiven the ini-<br>quity of thy people, thou hast<br>covered all their sin. Selah.                   | 9 Surely his salvation is nigh<br>them that fear him; that glory<br>may dwell in our land.   |
| 3 Thou hast taken away all<br>thy wrath: thou hast turned<br><i>thyself</i> from the fierceness of<br>thine anger. | 10 Mercy and truth are met to-<br>gether; righteousness and peace<br>have kissed <i>each other</i> .   |
| 4 Turn us, O God of our sal-<br>vation, and cause thine anger<br>toward us to cease.                               | 11 Truth shall spring out of<br>the earth; and righteousness<br>shall look down from heaven.   |
| 5 Wilt thou be angry with us<br>for ever? wilt thou draw out<br>thine anger to all generations?                    | 12 Yea, the LORD shall give<br><i>that which is good</i> ; and our<br>land shall yield her increase.   |
| 6 Wilt thou not revive us a-<br>gain: that thy people may re-<br>joice in thee?                                    | 13 Righteousness shall go be-<br>fore him; and shall set us in<br>the way of his steps.  |
| 7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,   |  |

## LECTURE 928.

*The attributes of God harmonized in Christ's death.*

This is one of the psalms of which it does not seem possible to determine with certainty when it was written or by whom. At the commencement it testifies with thankfulness to God's mercies experienced of old; it then refers to his anger again kindled and takes the form of earnest supplication for renewed pardon and deliverance. Afterwards it sets forth the revelation of that peace which God speaks from heaven to his people. And to whatsoever deliverance it may have referred at the beginning, we cannot doubt that in the latter part of it there is a prophetic allusion to the redemption of mankind from death and condemnation, through Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. Let us with the psalmist hearken, that we may hear what the Lord has revealed on this subject, the most important of all others to every one of us. And whilst we thank Him for his one great act of love unspeakable, in giving his Son to be our Saviour, let us pray that He will be yet further gracious unto us, and make us partakers of this great salvation.

What then may we consider to be the prophetic interpretation of these striking words, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other"? When could

this be, but when Jesus Christ our Lord made full atonement to the Father for our sins? For in what, but in regard to man's fallen state, were mercy and truth opposed? What estrangement was there ever between righteousness, or strict justice, and peace, or being at peace with God, except in the case of man's alienation from his Maker; whose perfect righteousness could not be compatible with the peace of his sinful creatures, nor his perfect truth with mercy shewn unto their sins, except by means of the reconciliation wrought by Christ Jesus? This then is the peace which God speaks unto his people. "But let them not turn again to folly." It is not that they can be saved in their sins, but that they may be saved from them. It is not for them to continue in sin, it is not for this that grace has abounded, but it is for them to glorify their Saviour by holiness of life. "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him." But how little can they fear Him, who venture to transgress his commandments? And it is that "glory may dwell in our land." What however but discredit and dishonour to Christ and to his Gospel is this, for his people to disobey his voice?

We see then herein a figurative account of the Gospel dispensation. We see mercy and truth meeting as parties reconciled to each other. We see righteousness and peace kissing, as friends who have become of one mind. We interpret this salutation as signifying, that the attributes of God have been reconciled to each other by the death of Christ. And we would also fain interpret what follows of the state of God's church under the Gospel. "Truth shall spring out of the earth." May it be so through the blessed seed which God has sown amongst us! "And righteousness shall look down from heaven." May we be enabled to look up to it from the earth, even though it be God's perfect justice, because now made compatible in our view with his divine peace! "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield her increase!" May this our country, and every country of the world, yield fruits of holiness answerable to that good which God has given us, the good gift of the Holy Spirit of God! "Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps." May we be glad to be set in that way, and diligent to walk therein; not alarmed but encouraged by the thought that God is just, because we are thereby reminded of his assurance, that notwithstanding his justice, He is the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. See Rom. 3. 26.

*David pleadeth many things in prayer.*

A Prayer of David.

1 Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy.

2 Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

3 Be merciful unto me, O LORD: for I cry unto thee daily.

4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

5 For thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plentiful in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

8 Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O LORD; neither are there any works like unto thy works.

9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O LORD; and shall glorify thy name.

10 For thou art great, and

doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

12 I will praise thee, O LORD my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

13 For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

15 But thou, O LORD, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plentiful in mercy and truth.

16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

## LECTURE 929.

*Of urging reasons to God in our prayers.*

Throughout this striking form of prayer the psalmist urges reasons with God, as well as supplications; reasons for granting his petitions. First he refers to the circumstances of his own state and case, as arguments for God to have mercy upon him. "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy." Here his want is the ground of claim upon attention. Again, "Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee." Here it is his holiness, or dedication to God's service, and the trust which he put in God, that he pleads in support of his petitions. Again, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily." Here he urges the frequency and constancy of his prayers. And once



more, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." Here the warmth of his devotion is stated, his lifting up his soul to God; an expression that puts to shame the prayers of those, who do no more than say them with their lips.

The next topics which are urged by the psalmist, in support of his petitions, are taken from the attributes and dealings of God himself. "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Therefore he begs that God will attend to his supplications. And again, "for thou wilt answer me;" this makes him resolve to call on God in the day of trouble. And again, he states, that among the gods there is none like unto the Lord, neither are there any works like his works, and this is a reason for all nations to pray to Him and to praise Him. And the psalmist pleads it further as an argument with God to teach him the right way, that he might walk in it, and to fill his heart with a right fear of God, "unite my heart to fear thy name." And in like manner he states his reasons for praising God, even as he had done for praying unto Him. "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." And then, after mention of the trouble and jeopardy in which he was placed by the insurrection of wicked doers, he dwells upon the long suffering and goodness of the Lord, on his compassion, and his plenteousness in mercy and truth; and so much the more earnestly and confidently does he appeal to God for help and deliverance, because of the help and comfort which he had previously partaken of at the hand of the Almighty.

This psalm then not only supplies us with an excellent form of prayer, in regard to the things which we ought to pray for, but also sets before us a pattern of the kind of reasons, pleas, or arguments, with which we may do well to urge our petitions; at once as animating our own devotions, and also as weighing with Him to whom they are addressed. We know indeed that it is only through the intercession of our Saviour that either prayers or praises of ours can be accepted at the throne of grace.

We know that his merits are the all prevailing plea, by which alone our heavenly Father can be inclined to hear our words. But there is a fitness and reasonableness in some words rather than in others. We are bound to pray with the understanding as well as with the spirit. And in this pattern of an inspired prayer, God has Himself taught us that He would have us pray, as if we felt that He is to be best moved by that which is most reasonable, that is to say, most right, and just, and good. Thanks be to Him for hearing us at all. Thanks be to Him for teaching us in his word how we ought to pray, and for assuring us of his willingness to hear us, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*The psalmist declareth God's love for Zion.*

A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah.

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 His foundation is in the       | man was born there.                               |
| holy mountains.                  |   |
| 2 The LORD loveth the gates      | 5 And of Zion it shall be said,                   |
| of Zion more than all the dwell- | This and that man was born in                     |
| ings of Jacob.                   | her: and the Highest himself                      |
|                                  | shall establish her.                              |
| 3 Glorious things are spoken     | 6 The LORD shall count, when                      |
| of thee, O city of God. Selah.   | he writeth up the people, <i>that</i>             |
|                                  | this <i>man</i> was born there. Selah.            |
| 4 I will make mention of Ra-     | 7 As well the singers as the                      |
| hab and Babylon to them that     | players on instruments <i>shall be</i>            |
| know me: behold Philistia,       | <i>there</i> : all my springs <i>are</i> in thee. |
| and Tyre, and Ethiopia; this     |   |

## LECTURE 930.

*Of our being citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.*

Many passages in the Law as revealed by Moses refer to the place which God should choose "to put his name there." Deut. 12. 5; 16. 2. That place proved to be Jerusalem, built on the hill of Zion, with the temple on mount Moriah. These were the holy mountains, in which it pleased God that the foundations should be laid, for a city which He would love rather than all others, for a temple in which He would be worshipped rather than in any place elsewhere. Glorious things are spoken of this city in God's law. For here it was ordained that all the festivals should be celebrated, and here all the sacrifices offered. And these we know were types of Gospel blessings, as well as of Gospel thankfulness; of the offering made once for all, in atonement for all sin, the offering of a spotless sacrifice, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1. 29. And here it was that in after times that spotless sacrifice actually was offered on the cross. And this was, and is, and ever will be, the true glory of Jerusalem, that there, by the efficacy of the only meritorious sacrifice ever offered, God was reconciled to all mankind.

Nor was it hidden from the Jews, if they had but been willing so to understand their Scriptures, that the efficacy of this sacrifice would extend far beyond their own nation; and that natives of other lands, and citizens of other countries would be counted for citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, and be born again by a new and spiritual birth, adopted children of the most high God. This seems to be the doctrine darkly shadowed forth in the prophetic language of the psalm before us. "I will make mention of Rahab," which is another name for Egypt, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, and Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was

born in her;" that is to say, they who are born naturally in Egypt or in Babylon, in Philistia, Tyre, or Ethiopia, shall be said to be born spiritually in the city of God, shall be counted for children of Zion. "And the Highest himself shall establish her." God shall so replenish his holy city with citizens innumerable. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there."

In conformity to this prophecy thus interpreted, we are told, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that we are "come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Heb. 12. 22. At least they to whom that Epistle was addressed are so told. And we know from other parts of holy Scripture, that we are made partakers of all the privileges of the Gospel, in common with the most favoured of our brethren of the house of Israel. Let us then endeavour to live as citizens of no mean city. Let us endeavour to realize in our lives some of the glorious things spoken of the city of God. Let us fulfil the spirit of that holy law, of which the Jews understood little more than the letter, and which our Lord has expressly told us that He came not to destroy but to fulfil. And let us particularly mark the brief but expressive account of this city of God given us in the last verse of the psalm before us. "As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee." God's city is a place of song and music; a place in which God's praise is made daily to be heard, by every one and every thing that hath breath. God's city is a place of plentiful refreshment; a place in which the springs of healing virtue, and life renewing grace, that flow direct from God, cease not to flow for ever. Oh, if even whilst on earth we may be truly said to have become members thereof, let us already exercise our privileges, as far as our state here admits, by living a life of thankfulness, and rejoicing to sing songs of praise, and ascribing all our health and strength of soul, all our hope and rejoicing of spirit, to the only and the ample source of every good thing, our Saviour and our God.



*The psalmist uttereth his lamentation unto God.*

A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Esrahite.

- 1 O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee:
- 2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;
- 3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
- 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
- 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.
- 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.
- 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.
- 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: *I am* shut up, and I cannot come forth.
- 9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.
- 10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.
- 11 Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?
- 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
- 13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.
- 14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?
- 15 I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
- 16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.
- 17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.
- 18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.

## LECTURE 931.

*That we may do well to sorrow after this inspired pattern.*

The usual frame of mind of a devout Christian is a cheerful one; and he never feels himself more like to that which he believes God would have him be, than when he is fulfilling this rule of the apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4. 4. And yet many circumstances may conspire to bring clouds of sorrow over the bright sunshine of Christian joy. Some men are naturally of a melancholy temperament. Ill health affects the spirits of others, and depresses them. Others are visited by an unusual share of heart rending *woes*. And others again are placed in a situation where the pre-

valence of iniquity in the world is forced on their attention; and in their sorrows they can use the language of another of the psalms, "Mine eyes gush out with water, because men keep not thy law." Ps. 119. 136.

To those who are in any of these ways distressed in mind, the psalm before us will supply such comfort as may be derived from the sympathy of an inspired writer. For the affecting language of lamentation, here freely poured forth, proves, that whosoever wrote this psalm, on whatsoever occasion he composed it, could have been no stranger to feelings of the deepest distress. And when we reflect that he who spake these words, spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, see 2 Pet. 1. 21, we shall perhaps feel justified in looking on this psalm as an instance, in which the Spirit of God has vouchsafed for the comfort of the afflicted, to act upon a principle elsewhere revealed, and as far as the case admits of it, to "weep with them that weep." Rom. 12. 15. How soothing to our spirits, when depressed by sickness, or by grief, by the apprehension of death, or by the loss of those friends whose love helped largely to make life desirable, how soothing to turn to this psalm of lamentation, and by adopting its inspired language, instead of our own fretful words, at once to sanctify the expression of our sorrows, and to soften their severity!

Nor shall we feel the less warranted in doing so, but rather so much the more, if we look upon this psalm as a prophetic expression of the grief and affliction of our blessed Lord. For He was, we know, in all things our great example. Even his cross, that stupendous instance of self humiliation, and self sacrifice, even his crucifixion is in some sort set before us as a pattern of our own; for we, if we would be his disciples, must take up our cross, and follow Him. And the words of this psalm, which seem to answer so aptly to the case of Christ hanging on the cross, may therefore be also fit for us to utter as we take up our cross daily. May we find in the use of them the benefit of applying under every distress with prayer unto the God of our salvation! And when we are driven by sorrow to have recourse to them, may we be made partakers of this precious promise, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted!" Matt. 5. 4.

*The psalmist resolveth to sing of God's mercies.*

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.</p> <p>2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.</p> <p>3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,</p> <p>4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. <i>Selah.</i></p> <p>5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.</p> <p>6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? <i>who</i> among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?</p> <p>7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all <i>them that are</i> about him.</p> <p>8 O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?</p> <p>9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.</p> | <p>10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.</p> <p>11 The heavens <i>are</i> thine, the earth also <i>is</i> thine: <i>as for</i> the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.</p> <p>12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.</p> <p>13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, <i>and</i> high is thy right hand.</p> <p>14 Justice and judgment <i>are</i> the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.</p> <p>15 Blessed <i>is</i> the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.</p> <p>16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.</p> <p>17 For thou <i>art</i> the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.</p> <p>18 For the LORD <i>is</i> our defence; and the Holy One of Israel <i>is</i> our king.</p> |
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## LECTURE 932.

*The blessedness of enjoying Christian privileges.*

It is not uncommon for a psalm to begin with the utterance of lamentation, and to conclude with expressions of cheerfulness and joy. In the present case the psalmist begins with praising God for his goodness, though we shall find that towards the end he very sorrowfully laments the loss of the divine favour. The subjects both of his praise and of his lamentation are the dealings of God with the house of David. And there can be no doubt that the psalm applies prophetically to Him, of whom it was said by the angel unto Mary, "the Lord shall give unto him the throne



of his father David." Luke 1. 32. To Him, and to those who are members of his family, has the Almighty Father bound Himself by an everlasting covenant. And his covenant with Christians, like his covenant with David, and with the seed of David according to the flesh, is not without express conditions; which if we presume to violate, we must not be surprised to find that instead of mercy we meet with the displeasure of the Lord.

But the psalmist has no sooner mentioned God's entering into covenant with David, as a signal instance of his mercy and faithness, than he breaks forth into a celebration of the praise of God, by reason of his supreme excellence in all things. He declares, in a strain of rapture, that the heavens would fain praise the Lord, as he for his part desired to do also, both for the marvellousness of the works of God's creation, and for the faithfulness of his dealings with his people. Who, he asks, could be compared with God, meaning, either for greatness, or for goodness, or for any point of excellency whatsoever, who, either in heaven or on earth? God, he declares, is greatly to be feared, so awful is his divine majesty, greatly to be feared even "in the assembly of the saints," even among those whose holiness of heart and life might seem to exempt them from necessity of fearing. "And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Even those who are most nigh unto his throne must never pass the line of humble adoration.

Next the psalmist points out some few particulars in which God is great and good beyond comparison. He rules the raging of the sea. He makes calm the waves thereof when they arise. He it was who smote Rahab, that is, Egypt; who vanquished that most mighty of all the nations then existing on the face of the whole earth. The earth and the heavens alike are his. The north and south are of his creation. The loftiest mountains glory in nothing else so greatly as in their Maker's name. And if his power in creation be thus matchless, how much more are his "justice and judgment," his "mercy and truth," as manifested in his dealings with mankind, altogether beyond any possibility of parallel! How happy then are the people "that know the joyful sound!" how blest their lot to walk in the light of the countenance of God! That lot is ours, if we will. To rejoice in God's name, to be exalted in his righteousness, to have God for the glory of our strength, and his favour for the height of our distinction, to have the Lord for our defence, and "the Holy One of Israel" for our King, these blessings, which the psalmist speaks of as proofs of God's goodness to his people, these blessings are our privileges; and it is our own fault if they redound not to our exceeding joy and glory. To God be all the praise for this and all his goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*The psalmist telleth of God's covenant with David.*

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.

20 I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

21 With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.

22 The enemy shall not exact upon him: nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.

24 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

28 My mercy will I keep for

him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;

32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

33 Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

## LECTURE 933.

*The covenant of God with David fulfilled.*

In the second book of Samuel, after mention of this message sent to David by the Lord through the prophet Nathan, it is added, "According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David." 2 Sam. 7. 17. The particulars of the vision are set down in this psalm somewhat more fully than in the history. And we cannot fail to remark here, as is evident also there, that these promises refer to some one else, besides David's son Solomon, and besides his descendants in the common course of nature; even to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who was at once the Son of David, and the Son of God.

In the case of David, the promise was fulfilled, first by his own great prosperity, and next by the prosperity of his descendants, *reigning* in Jerusalem after him, of as many of them as kept the

commandments of the Lord. Numerous and powerful were the foes with whom David was surrounded. But the Lord delivered him from them all. Great was the extent of his dominions. And much more exalted was his glory in being adopted by God, as here promised, in the character of a first born son, by this adoption made heir of the covenant and promises originally secured to his father Abraham. For what indeed is all the glory of dominion upon the earth? Nothing to a being made for immortality, nothing to one whose days on earth are but as a span; nothing, except so far as earthly prosperity might be taken for a token, as in David's case it might, of the favourable regard of God.

In the case of David's Son, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise, in respect to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the words of this vision have been also largely fulfilled. He is not only God's first born but also his only begotten Son. His dominion has already reached far and near throughout the earth, and is continually increasing in extent. His Gospel has gone forth into all lands; and no weapons formed against it by Satan's malice or by man's perversity have been able to overthrow it. And this is a dominion in the soul. It is a reigning in the hearts of men. How much greater is the glory of a reign like this than all the state of worldly empire! How far above all David's other glory was this covenanted privilege, that from him should spring the Saviour of the world, the King of all its kings, and of all the people under them!

Nor has this prophetic vision proved less true, in regard to that which it says of David's offspring, in case of their becoming disobedient. Witness the sore chastisements inflicted on the kings of Judah and Jerusalem, when they dared to forsake God's law, and violate the very first of his commandments. Witness the sore trouble and captivity of their people, and after their return from captivity the subjugation of their crown and kingdom, as tributary to the nations round about them. A miracle indeed of mercy was their returning from captivity at all. And in the heavier chastisement which they afterwards provoked by rejecting their Messiah, in their wide dispersion, and in their miserable condition as dispersed, it may be that they are reserved for another signal manifestation of the covenanted love of the Most High, and that their restoration to his favour will furnish yet another most striking proof that his faithfulness never fails. May it be likewise in regard to those chastisements, which are drawn down upon themselves by Christians, and by Christian churches. These are they whom Christ sees, according to the prophet, as "his seed," and "the travail of his soul." Is. 53. 10, 11. And being Himself without spot of sin, it is only in his people that this the true Son of David could be counted as a transgressor of the law of God. May we, who for our sins have justly deserved to be punished, be mercifully forgiven for the sake of Him who is Himself altogether sinless!



*The psalmist lamenteth the loss of God's favour.*

38 But thou hast cast off and thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.

41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.

42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.

44 Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.

45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

48 What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 LORD, where are thy former loving kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?

50 Remember, LORD, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people;

51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

52 Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

## LECTURE 934.

*How the covenant of God may be made void.*

Countless are the devices of man's deceitful heart, for reconciling a life of disobedience with the enjoyment of the divine blessings. The covenant of God, for instance, is pleaded by some, as authorising or sanctioning a life of ungodliness. And men express themselves as if they were surprised to find that there is any risk of their perishing everlastingly, after they have once been bound to God, and God bound to them, by that most sacred bond. Let such persons hear the psalmist, the inspired psalmist say to God, "thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant." Let them learn hence, that this must be a righteous thing for God to do, whensoever his people by their transgressions make void their covenant with Him. The descendants of David had no ground to complain in their grievous calamities. Their disasters and disgrace were the consequences of their own misconduct. And Christians, the seed of Him who is the seed of David, Christians who according to the promises of Christ might

look to wear "a crown of glory that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. 5. 4, will have no one but themselves to blame to all eternity, if they should be given up to the malice of their spiritual enemy, and sentenced to everlasting shame.

We must own that there appears to be some difficulty here. There appears to be some ground for the devices of self-deceit in this unquestionable truth, that God is at once just, and the Justifier of them which believe in Jesus; in the life and immortality brought to light by Christ in the gospel, and offered in his name to the very chiefest of sinners. But though there is ground on which those who wish to be deceived may be deceived, there is nothing which need perplex an honest enquirer after truth; there is nothing to uphold any one in the notion, that because he is a Christian, because he is by covenant a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, therefore he may the more safely lead a life the very opposite to that which God has commanded. No, certainly; for the same holy Scriptures, which tell us the glad tidings of the Gospel, set forth this great instance of God's love, the redemption of mankind by Christ, as in itself a most weighty reason for standing in awe of his judgments. And even our own sense could tell us, that the greater is the mercy which we venture to abuse, of so much the sorer punishment are we worthy.

And yet who is there amongst us that has not by wilful transgression made void his covenant with God? Who durst venture to abide by the words of the Gospel, as the rule of his life, and the measure of his sentence, to be applied to him in all their fulness, and in all their strictness, to be applied to all that he has done, and said, and thought, all that he has wished, and loved, and feared, since the time when he was made partaker of the Christian covenant? Blessed be God, that we are yet allowed to plead for fresh acts of grace on his part, for renewal of pardon, and renewed restoration to his favour. Let us with the psalmist plead our own infirmity, how short our time is, how frail we are, how mortal. Let us in our prayers remind God of his former lovingkindnesses, and beseech Him to repeat them yet once more in our behalf. Let us urge the reproach wherewith his enemies are apt to reproach not only us, but the cause which we bring into discredit, if we fall away unto perdition. And whilst we pray that God may raise us up, and make us to walk uprightly in the ways of his commandments, let us not conclude without praising his holy name, alike for the mercies we have heretofore experienced, and for those which we pray and hope for in time to come. "Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen."

*The psalmist lamenteth how short our time is.*

*A Prayer of Moses the man of God.*

1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

### LECTURE 935.

*The prayer of this psalm adapted to our case.*

If this psalm were written, as the title implies, by Moses, it was probably on occasion of the great mourning wherewith the people mourned in the wilderness, on being informed that by reason of their faithless murmurings they should perish there, and never come into the promised land. See Numb. 14. 39. It certainly expresses sentiments very suitable to the Israelites in that season of most deep affliction, but which are also just, and true, seasonable, and profitable, at all times, and to all mankind. God, the eternal God, is in all ages a never failing refuge to mortal man. His eternal being is ever fitted to inspire confidence



and adoration in us, who for our sins have been made mortal, and whose time, whether it be a thousand years as at the first, or three-score and ten as now, is but as yesterday in the sight of the Almighty. His sentence it is that has turned us to destruction, saying, "Return, ye children of men," or, as it is written in the book of Genesis, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3. 19. He it is who makes us to be swept away "as with a flood," to pass off "as a sleep," to be cut down and wither "like grass." It is by his anger that we are consumed, by his wrath that we are troubled. And why? because of our iniquities; because our most secret sins are open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. Because we are transgressors of his will, rebellious children, creatures that submit not to the laws of their Creator; therefore are our days few and evil, therefore do we soon bring our years to an end, even as a tale that is told.

But with our mortality thus staring us in the face, with the many instances daily reminding us, that in the midst of life we are in death, how few are there that seriously lay to heart the power of the wrath of God! how few who seem to understand, that in proportion as they duly fear God, the risk of suffering by his wrath is less! Well may we all join in this supplication of the psalmist, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." The shorter our time is, and the more we therefore hasten to enjoy it, make us, O Lord, sensible, that our way to live in pleasure, is to live according to thy will. In the marvellous forbearance and loving kindness, which Thou hast shewed to thy servants, let us find a constant source of joy, a continual theme of thankfulness. And as Thou hast been pleased to work good out of evil, and hast turned even the sin of man into an occasion of manifesting thy own great goodness in the redemption of mankind through Christ, so let us also be "glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us," let our transitory years of trouble soon be turned into an eternity of joy. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." Yea, Lord, give us the wisdom to see, to understand, and to acknowledge, thy marvellous work, in the saving of our sinful race. "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," that is to say, the beauty of holiness in which Thou Thyself art ever glorious. "And establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou." Work in us that which is good; and accept the good works which we are thus enabled to do; establish them, record them in our favour, and reward them according to thy promise, in the world which is to come, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The psalmist setteth forth the safety of the godly.*

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day;

6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD *which is* my refuge, *even* the most high, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

## LECTURE 936.

*The witness of prophecy to the blessedness of Christ.*

Happy indeed are they to whom this beautiful description may justly be applied; safe in the midst of danger, with angels to minister to their safety, with God himself for their Friend; happy they of whom it may be truly said, that they dwell "in the secret place of the most high." Surely these are they to whom the apostle writes, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3. 2, 3. Surely this is to dwell "in the secret place of the most high," when in our hearts we are much with Him by faith, not caring for our devout affections to be gazed on by mankind, but delighting to pour them out in prayer and praise unto our "Father, which seeth in secret;" Matt. 6. 18; and delighting to pour them before God in acts of self denial, zeal, and bounty, so privately and quietly performed,

as that we let not our left hand know what our "right hand doeth." Matt. 6. 3.

The character of the kind of person here intended is briefly but clearly traced in this simple profession of his faith, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust." The safety which ensues on his thus abiding under the shadow of the Almighty is described more at length; and the psalmist assures him that angels have it in charge to keep him from harm in all his ways. Nay, God also speaks in his own person at the close of the psalm, declaring of such an one as this, that He will himself deliver him, set him on high, answer to his call, be with him in trouble, deliver him and honour him, satisfy him with length of life, and shew him the salvation of the Lord. And all this for a reason expressly stated, "Because he hath set his love upon me;" and again, "because he hath known my name," that is to say, has acknowledged its excellency, has confessed and honoured God before men, has honoured him by holiness of life. Happy they who have reason such as this to shew, for hoping and trusting that God will deliver them; happy, because, whatever be the promises of God revealed in the Old Testament, we know that God has revealed to us better things in the New; we learn there that all things, not only prosperity but also tribulation, not only safety but also hurt and affliction, yea, and even temptation also, "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8. 28.

And here it must be observed, that two of the verses of this psalm are applied to our blessed Lord by the tempter in the wilderness, namely these: "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." See Matt. 4. 6. And as our Lord appears to have admitted, that these words properly applied to Him, we have here an instance of the Scriptures testifying of Christ, in a passage, which without this notice, we should have been apt to apply only to a devout Christian. Let us then see throughout this psalm the testimony of prophecy to the holy and devout life of Jesus Christ, and to the love of the only begotten Son towards the Father, and of the Father to the Son. And let us glorify God for shewing us, in Christ, how we ought to call upon Him, love Him, and obey Him; and for promising us in Christ, promising to the members, as partakers in the felicity of the Head, not only safety, but also honour; not only to be satisfied with such length of life as we have here, but also to enjoy everlasting salvation.



*The psalmist setteth forth subjects of praise towards God.*

A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day.

- 1 *It is a good thing to give* high for evermore.  
 thanks unto the LORD, and to  
 sing praises unto thy name, O  
 most high :
- 2 To shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,
- 3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery ; upon the harp with a solemn sound.
- 4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work : I will triumph in the works of thy hands.
- 5 O LORD, how great are thy works ! and thy thoughts are very deep.
- 6 A brutish man knoweth not ; neither doth a fool understand this.
- 7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish ; *it is* that they shall be destroyed for ever :
- 8 But thou, LORD, art most
- 9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish ; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
- 10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn : I shall be anointed with fresh oil.
- 11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.
- 12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree : he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
- 13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.
- 14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing ;
- 15 To shew that the Lord is upright : *he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness* in him.

## LECTURE 937.

*God is to be praised for his works, and for his dealings.*

Though the title of this psalm states that it is “a Song for the sabbath day,” the psalm speaks of that which it is a good thing to do on every day, namely, to sing praises unto God. And we cannot better employ such skill in music as we may possess, than in shewing forth God’s loving kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night. Certainly they who add daily praise to their daily prayers, who either by themselves, or in common with their assembled families, make the sound of God’s praise to be heard, by singing psalms and hymns unto his glory, they who do thus each morning, or each evening, or both, enjoy a very great privilege, and perform a service very acceptable to God, if they perform it with a devout spirit, very acceptable to our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The topics or subjects of the praise which the psalmist here enumerates, are chiefly these, the great works of God, his judg-

ments on the wicked, and his goodness to the godly. "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands." The works of creation, no less than those of redemption, are well fitted to engage our devout attention, and to suggest thoughts of thankfulness, and songs of praise. We find indeed that in the psalms, those inspired songs of Sion, and those best models both for the matter and manner of all devotional hymns, there occurs very frequent mention of God's great power and goodness as the Maker and Governor of the universe. Let us therefore attentively mark the many traces of the divine workmanship which are brought before our view every day. Let us both enjoy the good things which God gives us in this present world, the glorious sights, the pleasant fruits, the fragrant flowers; and let us also frequently make these things the subjects of our devout reflection, and of our heartfelt praise.

It is the part of an unwise man to take no notice of the excellency of God's work. Nor does such an one think of the end which awaits the wicked after they have been permitted to flourish for awhile, namely, "that they shall be destroyed for ever." But this also is in the apprehension of the devout, a thing for which God ought to be praised; one proof among many, that He is "most high for evermore." It would indeed be no small disparagement of his greatness and his goodness, if those who are his enemies, and the enemies of his people, fared as well in the end as his devoted worshippers. Whilst on the other hand it is a manifest token of his righteousness, if his enemies, though permitted to flourish for awhile, are sure to perish miserably in the end.

Another proof that "the Lord is upright," and that "there is no unrighteousness in him," arises from the consideration of his favour shewn unto the godly. And the psalmist, speaking in their name, professes his conviction, that God will exalt their horn, and anoint them with fresh oil; that is to say, will raise them to the height of prosperity; that He will give them every advantage in the end over the wicked that rise up against them; that He will make them flourish like a palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon; that they will be as though planted in his house, and flourishing in his courts; or, as it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." Is. 61. 3. Lastly, let us observe that hereby is God glorified, if we bear much fruit. Let us observe that the psalmist especially praises God for this, in behalf of these trees of righteousness, "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." The older therefore we grow, let us so much the more abound in good works; and we shall be so much the better fitted to be transplanted into that eternal life, where we shall sing God's praise incessantly.

*The psalmist declareth God's majesty and power.*

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| <p>1 The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, <i>where-with</i> he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.</p> <p>2 Thy throne <i>is</i> established of old: thou <i>art</i> from everlasting.</p> <p>3 The floods have lifted up, O</p> | <p>LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.</p> <p>4 The LORD on high <i>is</i> mightier than the noise of many waters, <i>yea</i>, than the mighty waves of the sea.</p> <p>5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.</p> |
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### LECTURE 938.

*The character which becomes members of God's family.*

"The Lord reigneth." The highest rank among mankind is that of royalty. We cannot therefore frame a notion or use language concerning God, that shall more highly exalt Him, than to say that He is a King. But we may put this notion in many points of view. We may add that He is King of kings. We may regard Him, according to the striking figure adopted in this psalm, as "clothed with majesty." We may conceive Him in his kingly robes as "clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself." We may take the solid earth, which seems to our mere sense the most unmovable of all things, for an emblem of the firmly stablished throne of God; remembering, that whilst the world had its beginning in time, God is from everlasting. Or fixing our thoughts on that one of all earthly objects, whose wide expanse, and the fury of its agitated waves, seem to render it beyond all others uncontrollable and irresistible, we may impress ourselves with a lively conviction of the strength of the Almighty, by reflecting, in the words of the psalmist, "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

And now, with our minds elevated by this striking description of God's great majesty and power, with these noble conceptions of his greatness set before us in the most vivid light, to what purpose shall we turn them? Is it enough that we ponder with admiration on the grandeur of an object so sublime as the almighty everlasting God? Far from it; we are reminded, as the psalm concludes, that He, whose power and majesty is so great, that it might seem to render us altogether beneath his notice, has vouchsafed to care for us, and has given us this proof of his caring for us, that He has revealed his testimonies unto us. He has told us what is his will in our behalf. He has informed us of the end for which we were created. He has accounted for all the misery which we find abounding in the midst of us, by relating how we fell from our original righteousness. He has shewn us the way



provided in his mercy for our restoration to holiness and happiness. He has testified of our Redeemer, from one end of the Scriptures to the other. He has taught us to rely with implicit faith on the redemption wrought for us by his ever blessed Son, who took on Him our flesh, and died for us on the cross. He has given us the promise of the Comforter to help us in living such a life on earth as becomes the redeemed of the Lord. And He has given us the assurance of a glorious resurrection, after this transitory life ended, after this guilty world destroyed, a glorious resurrection to eternal life. Such is the tenour of God's testimonies. How very sure must they be, seeing they are the testimonies of God; seeing they are the word of Him who reigneth King of kings, and Lord of lords, for ever! How entirely may we rely on the truth of his promises, how deeply must we stand in awe of his terrible threatenings, since there is nothing that can resist his power, nothing that can prevent his fulfilling his will!

And if He be Himself so great, his majesty so glorious, what manner of persons ought they to be, who shall be fit to be subject unto Him as his people, yea and shall be admitted, such is his grace vouchsafed to his faithful subjects, admitted to dwell with Him as his household? Let the psalmist reply to this enquiry: "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." If then we would be accounted meet members of that family, part in heaven, part on earth, which is named after the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, see Eph. 3. 14, 15, by the honourable name of sons of God, let us study to be "holy in all manner of conversation." 1 Pet. 1. 15. Let there be no action done by us, that is not fit for this great God to see, no word uttered which He with whom we dwell would be displeased to hear, no thought harboured which we should be ashamed for Him to witness. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." Let us think of this, when tempted to transgress. Let us think of this, when apt to flag in self denial, when loth to persevere in well doing. And whether it be the world that is enticing us, the flesh that would rebel, or Satan that endeavours to beguile our souls, let us check the first thought of surrendering to sin, by reflecting on this awful truth, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."

*The psalmist pleadeth unto God for justice.*

- 1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.
- 2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.
- 3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?
- 4 *How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*
- 5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.
- 6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.
- 7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.
- 8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?
- 9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?
- 10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?
- 11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.
- 12 Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;
- 13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.
- 14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.
- 15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.
- 16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?
- 17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.
- 18 When I said, My foot slip-peth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.
- 19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.
- 20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?
- 21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.
- 22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge.
- 23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

## LECTURE 939.

*The support of the righteous when they suffer wrongfully.*

The psalmist, speaking by divine inspiration, at once owns that vengeance belongs exclusively to God, and prays Him to execute it on cruel men. Hence we may learn whither we ought to look, when we suffer under oppression or persecution. Let us

cast all our care on God, knowing that He graciously cares for us, and well assured that He will in his good time make the right prevail against the wrong. The wicked may triumph for a season. They may boast in the success of their injustice. They may delight themselves in practices of cruelty. And they may imagine, in the folly of their hearts, that God takes no notice of their doings. But what violence is done to reason in supposing, that He who formed the eye sees not, that He who planted the ear hears not, that He who has gifted man with knowledge knows not! Surely He well knows our inmost thoughts. He can make our most secret sins to find us out. Much more then will He surely and speedily bring to judgment the gross iniquities of the oppressors of his people.

And as for those whom He allows to be cruelly entreated for awhile, blessed are they to be thus chastened of the Lord; blessed are they thus to suffer wrongfully, thus to be prepared by the trials of adversity for enjoying eternal rest! God will not forsake them that are his. Justice, which may seem to have left the earth for a season, will soon return to gladden the hearts of the upright, and to redress their wrongs. And in the meanwhile they have faith and hope for their support, they have present help from God to hold them up. In the tumult of their troubled thoughts they have his comforts to delight their souls. They are sure that He is not the helper and abettor of the wicked, no, not though these be seated in high places, and have the sanction of law, and of lawful authority, in behalf of their wicked doings. In the imperfect constitution of man's ordinances, such perversion of right may frequently take place. And as far as such ordinances are valid, it is the duty of the devout Christian to submit. For he knows that this is God's command, to submit himself to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. See 1 Pet. 2. 13. But so much the more is he inclined to cast all his care on God, to put all his trust in God, to derive all his consolation from God. So much the more does he seek in God for the liberty he most longs for, the safety not only of his body but also of his soul, to all eternity; the security not of his property on earth, but of his treasure which is laid up in heaven for evermore.

Support us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, under all our trials by the help of thy grace, and the comfort of thy word. And whatsoever it be thy will that we should suffer here, let our chastisements be blest to our endless gain; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.



*The psalmist exhorteth God's people to worship Him.*

- 1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
- 3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.
- 5 The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.
- 6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
- 7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,
- 8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:
- 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.
- 10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:
- 11 Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

## LECTURE 940.

*Of fleeing to God as the rock of our salvation.*

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the words of this Psalm are referred to, as among the writings of David, and as inspired by the Holy Ghost. See Heb. 3. 7. 4. 7. This seems to prove, that the titles of the psalms are, to say the least, imperfect, because this is not entitled a psalm of David. It is not however impossible, that these words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "saying in David," Heb. 4. 7, may mean no more than to refer to the Book of Psalms in general; which are called the Psalms of David, because most of them, though certainly not all, were composed by him.

In the obscurity which hangs over questions like this of comparatively slight importance, it is delightful to turn to that which is most clear and manifest in all parts of Scripture, and nowhere more so than in the psalm before us, namely, the revelation of God's great goodness, and of our inestimable privileges. Behold how many are the reasons for singing unto the Lord, how many grounds we have for rejoicing in Him! Behold how great is his goodness in inviting us to glorify his name, how wondrous his condescension, that He should suffer such as we are to draw nigh to Him at all in worship, much more allow us not only to confess our sins and ask for pardon and for help, but also to offer the sacrifice of praise, to offer it with assurance from Him that He is willing to accept it through Christ, yea, and also is glorified thereby! Is not this an inestimable privilege? And is it not

made immeasurably greater by the thought of God's infinite greatness; by the consideration that He, into whose presence we are invited to come with thanksgiving, "is a great King above all gods?"

His greatness is manifested in the grandeur of his works, his goodness in their excellency. And when we have surveyed land and sea, considered all their size, and strength, and depth, and remembered that He made them all, and when we have added unto these the sun, and moon, and stars, and the thought that He made these also, there is still something to be further mentioned as a proof of his great goodness, as a motive of more weight with man than all things else, to incline us to "worship and bow down," and this is, that He is "the rock of our salvation." "The rock of our salvation;" what an expressive figure is this! What a notion of firm security does it give us! What a solid resting place for our souls, when weary of the strife of tongues in questions of human learning, in man's speculations on God's truth; when convinced after many trials that all which this world has to give is nought but vanity and vexation of spirit; or when worn out in many a fruitless struggle with the power of habitual sin; what a solid resting place is suggested by the words, "the rock of our salvation!" Take refuge here ye shipwrecked mariners, whom storms of sore affliction have cast abroad upon the waters of adversity. Here find firm footing for thy wandering steps, thou pilgrim that hast been almost lost, in the deep mire of a carnal life, or in the dark pitfalls of doubting and despair. Flee to One who is both able and willing to save. Flee, and be safe. Be safe, and thankful for your safety. Be thankful in the heart, and give thanks aloud with your lips; make a joyful noise unto the God of your salvation.

But the greater is God's goodness in saving us, so much the greater is our sin if we neglect such great salvation. And therefore the psalmist warns God's people not to harden their hearts, as their fathers had done in the wilderness, whereby God had been provoked to declare as one in anger, and with a solemn oath, that they should not enter into his rest. But here another rest is spoken of, as we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews. A heavenly Canaan is here set before us; and we are warned that we run risk of losing it, if we hearken not to the voice of God whilst it is called to day. O come then let us make haste both to learn his will and to adore his name. Let us bow down our knees, and humble our hearts, before his divine majesty. And knowing that there is yet to be revealed for the people of God a rest eternal in the heavens, let us labour earnestly to enter into that rest through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The psalmist urgeth us to publish abroad the truth of God.*

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| <p>1 O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.</p> <p>2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.</p> <p>3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.</p> <p>4 For the LORD <i>is</i> great, and greatly to be praised: he <i>is</i> to be feared above all gods.</p> <p>5 For all the gods of the nations <i>are</i> idols: but the LORD made the heavens.</p> <p>6 Honour and majesty <i>are</i> before him: strength and beauty <i>are</i> in his sanctuary.</p> <p>7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.</p> <p>8 Give unto the LORD the</p> | <p>glory <i>due</i> unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.</p> <p>9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.</p> <p>10 Say among the heathen <i>that</i> the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.</p> <p>11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.</p> <p>12 Let the field be joyful, and all that <i>is</i> therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice</p> <p>13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 941.

*The testimony of our lives of great weight with unbelievers.*

This psalm is very nearly the same with a part of that which David caused to be sung, when he brought up the ark out of the house of Obbedom, and set it in the tent which he had pitched in Jerusalem. See 1 Chron. 16. 23—33. And as we find David on this occasion calling on all the earth to sing unto the Lord a new song, we cannot doubt that his words have a prophetic application to the times of the Gospel, when God's true religion, no longer confined to a single nation, was to be offered and proclaimed to all mankind. And by what means is the offer to be made known? Whose is the office of proclaiming peace by Christ Jesus unto those who know not of it? Whose, if not ours? Who are answerable, if not we, that know of this great salvation, who are answerable for it being made known to all men? Let us then make this one chief object of our lives, to do something towards declaring the glory of Christ among the heathen, towards publishing among all people the wonders which He has wrought.

It is not simply by our gifts, nor is it only by our prayers, that we ought to strive to promote this glorious object. We ought indeed to pray very heartily for the conversion of the heathen; and we ought to give very largely for this object.



But besides our prayers and gifts, there is something further which all of us can do. For all contribute their share to the general impression which goes forth from Christendom unto the rest of the world, as to the kind of religion which Christianity is. There is a voice more loud than that of any missionaries, a testimony, which has greater influence than any preacher's words, it is the testimony of our lives, it is the sound which arises from the practices that prevail in Christian countries, the report of which is heard unto the ends of the earth. Oh how little is that report like unto the words which we are here invited to proclaim: "The Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods!" Oh when shall we endeavour to persuade the nations that their gods are but idols, by shewing them how infinitely more deep is the reverence, how infinitely more implicit the obedience, which we habitually pay to our God? In vain do we call upon the kindreds of the people to give unto the Lord glory and strength, when it is clearly known to them, and cannot be denied, that we in general ascribe unto Him no such honour, that we give Him not the glory due unto his name, bring not unto Him the offering He requires at our hands, and come not as we ought into his courts. In vain do we invite the whole earth to fear before Him, and to worship Him in the beauty of holiness, as long as our own worship is in many instances mere formality, as long as there are notoriously very many indeed amongst us, who have no fear of God before their eyes.

And if Christ should now come to judgment, if the sign of the Son of man should be seen in the clouds of heaven, where would the dismay be greater, or more general, than in this our land so highly favoured with the privileges of the Gospel? Which are they that live as "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" 2 Pet. 3. 12. Where is the Christian community to be met with, that rejoices in the thought of Christ's coming to judge the people righteously, that rejoices so heartily as to call on all creation to join in gladness? Which Christians are they, that would have heaven and earth unite, the sea also, the fields, and the trees of the wood, unite in rejoicing at the second advent of Messiah, to "judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth?" If this language thus viewed convinces us of sin, let it also prevail with us to amend. If it be not such as we have hitherto helped to hold forth unto the heathen, as the genuine expression of our own devout feelings, let us endeavour first ourselves to feel thus devoutly, to live in this joyful expectation of our Lord's coming. Let us endeavour to communicate this heavenly minded joy to all whom we can influence nigh at hand. And we shall then have done something, aye, have done much towards shewing forth the salvation of the Lord in the most distant quarters of the world.

*The psalmist rejoiceth in the kingdom of heaven.*

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| <p>1 The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad <i>thereof</i>.</p> <p>2 Clouds and darkness <i>are</i> round about him: righteousness and judgment <i>are</i> the habitation of his throne.</p> <p>3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.</p> <p>4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.</p> <p>5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth.</p> <p>6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.</p> <p>7 Confounded be all they that</p> | <p>serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all <i>ye</i> gods.</p> <p>8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.</p> <p>9 For thou, LORD, <i>art</i> high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.</p> <p>10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.</p> <p>11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.</p> <p>12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.</p> |
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## LECTURE 942.

*The joy of the righteous at Christ's coming.*

It is observable that one of the expressions of this psalm is directly applied to Christ, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is thus written: "And again when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. 1. 6. Here the psalmist is spoken of as ushering in the first begotten Son of God into the world, that is to say, by the voice of prophecy. And here they who in the psalm are called "gods," are in the Epistle called "angels." For there is in truth no God but one, neither can there be; though there be many that are called gods. And whether they be angels that are so called, or any other beings, and by whomsoever they are called so, let us here learn that they are so much inferior to our Lord, that they are required to worship Him.

We may consider then that this psalm foreshews the glory and the majesty of the reign of Christ. "The Lord reigneth." The kingdom of heaven is here spoken of prophetically, as if it had already commenced. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." The setting up of his kingdom is a subject of rejoicing to all mankind; did they but know their true happiness, would they but choose it,



and rejoice in it. But alas there are many who set themselves against Him. There are many who resolutely declare, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Luke 19. 14. And therefore "clouds and darkness are round about him," clouds and darkness towards the wicked; for "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." And that we may know for whom his anger is prepared, it is added, "A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about." It is the coming then of Christ to judge the world, which is here spoken of. It is to his second advent that we may properly apply this awakening description, "his lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory." The psalmist saw this day by faith long time before hand. And shall not we have faith to see it now, when so much time has passed away, and when the end is so much more nigh? Shall not we subdue more easily the temptations of the world, by reflecting how soon all these things, and all their glory, must be destroyed, at the coming of the glory of the Lord?

At that day all the idols which have from time to time beguiled mankind will perish for ever. At that day most dreadful will be the shame and confusion of face of all who give to the creature the glory due to the Creator, of all who refuse to worship Christ the Lord. And then shall all true worshippers of the true God rejoice. They will be enabled to rejoice even in the judgments of the Lord, because these will manifest his greatness and his goodness. They will be enabled to rejoice in every thing. They will be admitted to partake of that felicity, which not even all the wickedness and misery now abounding in this fallen world is able for one moment to hinder or disturb. Their happiness will be so deeply founded in God's perfect goodness, that not even all the sufferings of them that perish to all eternity, though they cannot but be known to them that shall be saved, will be able to prevent them from enjoying in God's presence the unshaken confidence, that all which He does is right, that all is always well. And these are they that "love the Lord." For it will follow that they "hate evil." And with their own souls preserved, and their own deliverance secured, they will reap the fruit of that light which is "sown for the righteous;" they will understand things which here are most obscure, they will derive a pure and perfect gladness from things which are here altogether painful, in regard to the perdition of the ungodly. And this kingdom of heaven is at hand. There is nothing between us and its full manifestation, nothing except time. And when we compare time with eternity, what is there that should hinder our rejoicing in the Lord, as if Christ were already come?



## THE PSALMS WHICH ARE A TESTIMONY TO PRAISE GOD.

1. Psalm.

THE LORD IS WITH A NEW SONG PRAISED.

PRAISE YE THE LORD ONE AND ALL : Sing unto the LORD with  
 organs : with the harp, and  
 with the voice of a psalm.  
 With trumpets and sound of  
 dance : make a joyful noise be-  
 fore the LORD the King.  
 Let the sea roar, and the  
 fulness thereof : the world, and  
 they that dwell therein.  
 Let the floods clap their  
 hands : let the hills be joyful  
 before the LORD : for he  
 cometh to judge the earth : with  
 righteousness shall he judge the  
 world and the people with equity.

## LECTURE 941

THE NEW SONG WHICH IS TO BE PRAISED.

THE PSALMS ARE THE TWO WHICH FOLLOW IT, AS WELL AS THE TWO  
 WHICH WERE BEFORE IT, CONTAINING THAT DETERMINES WITH CER-  
 TAINTY THE OCCASION ON WHICH THEY WERE WRITTEN. THEY HAVE  
 BEEN ATTRIBUTED BY SOME TO MOSES, AND BY SOME TO DAVID ; WHILST  
 OTHERS SUPPOSE THAT THEY WERE WRITTEN TO CELEBRATE THE RETURN  
 OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FROM THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY. IF IN SUCH  
 UNCERTAINTY WE HESITATE TO ADD A FRESH CONJECTURE, THERE  
 ARE EXPRESSIONS IN ALL THESE FIVE PSALMS VERY SUITABLE TO EITHER OF  
 THOSE TWO GREAT DELIVERANCES, WHICH GOD WROUGHT FOR ISRAEL IN  
 THE HOUSE OF THE CAPTIVITY, THE DELIVERANCE OF SHADRACH, MESHACH,  
 AND ABERNETHY FROM THE BURNING FIERY FURNACE, AND THE DELIVER-  
 ANCE OF DANIEL FROM THE DEN OF LIONS. ON EACH OF THESE OCCA-  
 SIONS, THE REIGNING REVERARCH OF THE IDOLATROUS EMPIRE MADE A  
 DECREE IN FAVOUR OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL ; AND IT WAS HIGHLY  
 PROBABLE, THAT THE PROPHETS OF GOD'S PEOPLE WOULD BE INSPIRED TO  
 SING, AND WOULD TEACH HIS PEOPLE TO SING, TO THE GLORY OF HIS HOLY  
 NAME. IN EACH INSTANCE THERE WAS GOOD GROUND TO CALL UPON HIS  
 WORSHIPPERS TO SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG, FOR IN EACH IN-  
 STANCE HE HAD DONE MARVELLOUS THINGS ; WITH HIS OWN RIGHT HAND  
 AND WITH HIS HOLY ARM HE HAD GOTTEN TO HIMSELF THE VICTORY.  
 ON EACH OCCASION, HE HAD MADE KNOWN HIS SALVATION, AND HAD  
 OPENLY SHEWED HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE SIGHT OF THE HEATHEN.  
 AND WHILST HE GAVE SIGNAL TOKEN OF REMEMBERING HIS MERCY AND  
 HIS TRUTH TOWARD THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH,  
 "all people nations and languages," Dan. 6. 25, were made aware

of his great salvation. See Dan. 3. 29. We may therefore very probably apply this psalm, and for the like reasons the two which go before it, and the two which follow it, to one or other of these two great miracles, which God wrought in behalf of his captive servants, in the midst of the great empire of Babylon. And when a Nebuchadnezzar or Darius proclaimed a blessing on the God of Israel, and bade all nations do Him homage, we may well conceive the Israelites to join in the invitation, and say, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet, make a joyful noise before the Lord the King." And these words may perhaps determine which of the two miracles this psalm in particular refers to. For this mention of instruments of music seems to allude to the words of Nebuchadnezzar's first decree, that the people should fall down and worship the golden image which he had set up, immediately upon hearing "the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick." Dan. 3. 5.

But whatever were the occasion on which this psalm was written, we cannot but observe the resemblance between several of the expressions in it, and those of the song of Mary, upon her being saluted by Elizabeth, as recorded by S. Luke. On comparing the two, we can hardly doubt that the mother of our Lord expressly referred to this psalm, as prophetic of those marvellous things, which God has wrought by Christ in the Gospel. Here we need have no hesitation in framing the most probable conjecture that the case admits of. For our Lord has told us to search the Scriptures, meaning those of the Old Testament, with this significant reason given, "They are they which testify of me." John 5. 39. Here then let us gladly recognize a prophecy of Christ's kingdom, of the marvels which He wrought, of the victory which He won, of the salvation which He proclaimed to all, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. Here let us consider all the earth invited to rejoice in the glad tidings of his Gospel, every creature summoned to the celebration of his triumphant reign. As if all mankind were not enough, the earth which they inhabit, and the sea, the hills and floods, are all called upon to be joyful together before the Lord. And as if to remind us that our heavenly King is not like the Babylonish monarchs, who made decrees the most arbitrary, with penalties the most unrelenting, we have it set before us as the ground of our rejoicing, that "with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."

*The psalmist exhorteth all men to worship God.*

1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

## LECTURE 944.

*God is to be praised by reason of his holiness.*

Thrice in this psalm does the psalmist call on Israel, on all men, yea, on us among the rest, to praise God, and exalt his name, with this most solemn motive assigned, the holiness of the Lord. His majesty as King, the glory in which He is enthroned, his greatness in Zion, and his eminence above all people, these are the points dwelt upon before the first exhortation to praise his "great and terrible name; for it is holy." "The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble." Who must not stand in awe of a King so mighty? What people, what sovereign, in all the earth, shall refuse to fall down and worship Him, who rules, who made, them all? "He sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved." Who but must tremble with awe to approach his glorious throne, surrounded as it is by legions of the heavenly host, whose services and reverent attendance on his will were signified by the figures of the cherubim, both in the tabernacle, and in the temple, bowing towards the mercy seat on the ark? "The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people." His greatness, though especially made manifest to the Israelites, is no less to be adored by all mankind. He is not the God of one nation only, but of all; all men being alike subject to his power, all alike the creatures of his hand. Let all then unite to praise his "great and terrible name; for it is holy." His majesty as a King, the glory of his throne, his eminence above all men, all these united, however powerful to affect our minds with awe, derive fresh weight from this one consideration, most peculiar to the name of God, "it is holy."



But in the second place the psalmist urges us to worship God, because "the king's strength," this mighty King of whom he had been saying, "the Lord reigneth," "the king's strength loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob." These are new considerations, quite distinct from the greatness, and majesty, and glory of the Lord, namely his justice, his love of that which is just, his establishing that which is equitable, his executing that which is lawful and righteous. This ought to be the practice, and these the preferences, of earthly sovereigns. But even amongst the kings of Judah and of Israel there were many grievous instances to the contrary. And if this psalm were written in the times of the captivity, the conduct of their Babylonish oppressors must have presented to the Israelites a striking contrast, to the character of a righteous king here set before them. So much the more sensibly would they feel the force of the appeal, with which the psalmist again sums up his exhortation; "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy." As is his name, so is He himself, holy, holy, holy.

A third consideration set before us is the readiness and faithfulness with which God answers prayer. Witness Moses and Aaron, and the frequent success of their intercessions both for Pharaoh, and for the Israelites in the wilderness. See Exod. 9. 29, 33; 15. 25; 17. 10. Witness Samuel, and God's signal answer to his prayer, both when he besought the Lord for the defeat of the Philistines, and when he called for thunder and rain from heaven. See 1 Sam. 7. 9. 12. 18. Witness, we may add, Daniel, that man of prayer, who though he knew that the writing was signed, forbidding prayer to God under penalty of most horrible death, yet "went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Dan. 6. 10. Witness all, who in all nations and all ages have kept God's testimonies; witness if He have not fulfilled his word, that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers;" 1 Pet. 3. 12; witness if He have not been as ready to hear and forgive the penitent, as to punish the wilful and disobedient. And besides this evidence of his grace and goodness, besides this, it is once more to be noted, that "the Lord our God is holy." His greatness, his justice, his goodness, all are but parts of his holiness; all do but help to complete this most comprehensive argument for worshipping the Lord. To be holy, in the highest sense of the word, is at once to be great, and to be good. It is to be just, and at the same time merciful. It is to be pure and perfect. In short, it is to be that which no one altogether is except almighty God.

*The psalmist chargeth all to praise the Lord God Almighty.*

A Psalm of praise.

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| 1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.   | his pasture.   |
| 2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.   | 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. |
| 3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of | 5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.                         |

### LECTURE 945.

*Our way to exhort all men to serve God through Christ.*

We have supposed that this psalm was written, either when Nebuchadnezzar made a decree, forbidding every people nation and language to speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; see Dan. 3. 29; or when Darius wrote thus “unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.” Dan. 6. 25, 26. We may conceive of the church seconding this decree of the heathen monarch, in the awakening words of the psalm. And if we thus connect it with one of the most remarkable events, in the first universal monarchy in the world, we shall perhaps be better prepared to apply it to another, which has taken place under the last, the decree which went forth out of Judea, then a portion of the Roman empire, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark 16. 15.

Let this be the sense in which we now most heartily unite to use this “psalm of praise,” as it is well described in the title. Let us at once praise God for his goodness in the Gospel, and call on all mankind to join with us, in praising Him, because of those glad tidings of great joy. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.” Ye people that dwell afar off, as well as ye that are near, ye that are our countrymen, and ye that are strangers and aliens, ye that have gone out hence to settle in foreign parts, and ye that have lived from generation to generation in the regions of heathen ignorance, ye on whom the sun that sets with us is rising, whose midnight is when we have mid-day light and heat, ye who are not more opposite to us in position on our earth, not more distant in situation or differently circumstanced in climate, soil, and every outward circumstance, than diverse in manners, notions, practices, and above all in faith, ye

who worship stocks and stones for gods, ye who take the impostor Mahomet for a true prophet of the Lord, ye Jews too, who still obstinately cling to your abrogated Law, and still obstinately reject your crucified Messiah, and ye also, O most miserable of mankind, who under any form of faith outwardly professed, inwardly believe in nothing; join all with one consent, all people that on earth do dwell, to "serve the Lord with gladness," and "come before his presence with singing."

Thus would we now summon all mankind without exception to the worship of the true God. Thus would we bid all men heartily welcome to share with us the blessed privilege, of knowing Him, and serving Him, and glorifying his name. And this is the way by which we may now best hope to prevail, persuasion towards men, sanctified by prayer for the blessing of the Lord. The arbitrary decree of a Nebuchadnezzar or a Darius is not the means by which Christ would have his kingdom established on the earth. And though Christian princes, and Christian states, ought to bend all their energies, and to give all their influence, for the promotion of this glorious object, it is not by attempting to force the conscience, but by effectually persuading the understanding, and winning the affections to the truth, that they must seek to make the truth prevail. "Know ye that the Lord he is God:" not the vain idols which ye ignorantly worship, but the one eternal almighty Spirit, the Father Son and Holy Ghost. "Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" his workmanship we are, not as some of you vainly imagine, existing independently of any other power from all eternity, or like God selfexistent, but made by Him at the beginning, and ever since by Him preserved. "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture." He governs us with the authority of a king over his subjects. He watches over us, feeds us, cares for us, as a shepherd for his flock. Oh come therefore and "enter into his gates with thanksgiving; and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name." Cast away your dumb idols, root out your vain imaginations, relinquish your wicked practices; and serve henceforth devoutly the one living and true God. For know that He is good as He is great. He has not only created us, but also redeemed us. When we fell by transgression, He made provision for our being reconciled unto Himself. And as it is true of Him in all respects, so is it especially the case in regard to his dealings with us by his blessed Son, that "the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."



*David layeth down the rule of his conduct.*

A Psalm of David.

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| <p>1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.</p> <p>2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.</p> <p>3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.</p> <p>4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.</p> <p>5 Whoso privily slandereth his</p> | <p>neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.</p> <p>6 Mine eyes <i>shall be</i> upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.</p> <p>7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.</p> <p>8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 946.

*That we ought to discountenance evil doers.*

David seems to state at the beginning of this psalm that he will sing of the mercy and judgment of the Lord. Yet we find the psalm rather to consist of his own professed resolutions, as to the mercy and justice which he would himself practise. For in truth he meant to take God's dealings for a pattern of his own. And he was probably well aware, that whatsoever good he did was wrought in him by the goodness of the Lord. And further we may consider him to be here prophetically describing the mercy and judgment of Christ Jesus, of whose kingdom David's kingdom was a type. So that in singing of his own rules and principles of conduct, David was celebrating those of Him that was to come, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. In any point of view, the principles here set forth will be useful for our own practical direction. And we cannot do better than join with David, in purposing to be at once upright and kind, even as is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As to our own conduct, let us try to behave ourselves "wisely in a perfect way." A difficult undertaking; so frail and foolish are we all by nature. "But if any of you lack wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask of God." Jas. 1. 5. And this appears to have been David's thought, when he asked of God, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" and then repeated his holy purpose in nearly the same words, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." Here he is speaking of the perfect wisdom with which *he desired* to behave in his domestic duties. Next he expresses

his resolution to renounce wickedness in general. He would set no wicked thing before his eyes. He would avoid the temptation of looking at evil, that he might avoid the sin of committing it. He declares that he abhors evil; "I hate the work of them that turn aside," meaning, from God's commandments. "It shall not cleave to me." He renounces it for himself. And further as far as lies with him he will not allow it in others, "A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person." And then, speaking in the character of a magistrate and monarch, he adds, "Whoso privately slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart I will not suffer." And we, though we have no authority like that of David, may learn from him to use all such influence as we have in discountenancing evil, and encouraging that which is good. As far as we have choice, we may prefer for our friends and companions, for our masters or servants, such as are faithful in the land, them that walk the nearest to a perfect way. And by refusing to harbour them that work deceitfully, and speak falsely, we shall do somewhat towards rooting the wicked out of the land, by helping to root out the wickedness of them which dwell therein.

And in so doing we cannot doubt that we fulfil the will of Him whose servants we are; and the rule of whose proceedings in the administration of his government we may conceive to be here set down. We know that He is perfect, alike in wisdom and in truth, in judgment, in mercy, and in every thing. We know that He abominates the work of them that turn aside, according to these words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. 10. 38. We know that though He suffers the tares for a while to grow together with the wheat, yet not only will He separate them hereafter, by an awful separation for ever, but already also it is certain, that "the Lord knoweth them that are his." Whilst on the seal of God's foundation stone it is also plainly written, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Tim. 2. 19. Let us then delight to help in that which Christ delights to do. Let us steadfastly set our faces against wickedness in every kind and every degree. And though we are not able as He is to discern the heart, and are not permitted to judge any thing before the time, see 1 Cor. 4. 5, yet where we cannot help knowing the wicked from the good, let us prove, in all we say and do, that we constantly prefer the good to the wicked.

*The psalmist poureth out his complaint before God.*

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.

- 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.
- 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.
- 3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.
- 4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.
- 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.
- 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.
- 7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.
- 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
- 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,
- 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
- 11 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.
- 12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.
- 13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.
- 14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.
- 15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.
- 16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.
- 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.
- 18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.
- 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
- 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;
- 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;
- 22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.
- 23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.
- 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years *are* throughout all generations.
- 25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
- 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:
- 27 But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.
- 28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.



## LECTURE 947.

*The comfort of reflecting on God's eternal being.*

We have in this psalm an instructive precedent, for pouring out our complaint before God in prayer, whatsoever be the grief with which we are overwhelmed. The psalmist touches on so many sources of distress, that almost any one may find his own trouble here specified; whether it be wearisome hours of bodily pain, anguish of heart, loneliness in the loss of relatives and friends, the reproach of enemies, or the apprehension of God's displeasure. But there is another source of grief here touched upon, and which is felt deeply by those only, whose hearts are most truly generous, and truly charitable. The psalmist laments the fall of Zion's walls, and longs to see her ruined fortresses, much more her desolated temple, rebuilt, and reestablished. An enlightened love for our country, and for our church, is likely to cause us many a bitter pang, when either the one, or the other, is threatened or overtaken by disaster. A violence is done to those feelings, which taking us as it were out of ourselves, connect us in memory with generations long since dead, and in hope with them that shall come hereafter. We are driven back upon the consciousness of our own infirmity. And as we feel that singly we are weak and helpless beings of an hour, so we find, that even the numerous and continuing community with which we have rejoiced to feel ourselves associated, is liable, like ourselves, to disaster and decay. Such are some of the sources of our sorrow and complaint, to which we become liable, through the natural and reasonable and praiseworthy connection of our feelings, with the prosperity or adversity of our church or nation.

But for every grief the Scripture provides its proper consolation. And here we learn, that when depressed by the consciousness of our own weakness, and by the conviction of the frail and transitory nature of all things human, it ought to be our comfort to think of the abiding eternity of God. He remains unchangeable for ever. He has seen even the heavens come into existence, and He will see them vanish away; and will still be Himself the same. But does not this thought add to the depressing sense of our own littleness and nothingness? No; not if we be servants of God; not if we be his people, his faithful people, they who through Christ are become one with Him, and He one with them. For then we are assured, that transitory as is our present life, we have a life that never ends awaiting us. Then we rejoice in the assurance that whatever may befall our Zion here on earth, God will build up her walls in heaven for ever. The family, which we trust that we belong to, is that of God's servants, and their children. And these shall continue to all eternity. And when the heavens themselves shall have passed away, we shall be inhabitants of the new heavens and of the new earth, and shall neither weep nor lament any more.

*David stirreth up himself to bless the Lord.*

A Psalm of David.

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| <p>1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, <i>bless</i> his holy name.</p> <p>2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:</p> <p>3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;</p> <p>4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;</p> <p>5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good <i>things</i>; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.</p> <p>6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.</p> <p>7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.</p> <p>8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy.</p> <p>9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep <i>his anger</i> for ever.</p> <p>10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.</p> <p>11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.</p> <p>12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.</p> | <p>13 Like as a father pitieth <i>his</i> children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.</p> <p>14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we <i>are</i> dust.</p> <p>15 <i>As for</i> man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.</p> <p>16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.</p> <p>17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;</p> <p>18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.</p> <p>19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.</p> <p>20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.</p> <p>21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.</p> <p>22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 948.

*That God is to be praised for his inestimable benefits.*

Far be from us all vain lipservice in the praise of God! Rather let us with David call upon our souls, and on all that is within us, on every faculty of the mind, on every feeling of the heart, to bless his holy name. Let memory recount the benefits which He has graciously heaped upon us. Let love be kindled by reflecting on the love which He has been pleased to

manifest unto us. He forgives our iniquities. He does more, He heals the corruption of our nature, which prompts us to transgress. He redeems our life, so that we shall not die eternally. He prepares for us a "crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. 5. 4. Such is his mercy and loving kindness. He gives us also this world richly to enjoy, giving contentment with whatsoever lot we have, and also the consciousness that we are daily renewed by his grace, made more and more meet for the life which is to come. If we are oppressed by man, we know that there is One above who will see us righted. If we are in doubt, as to how we ought to walk and to please God, we find that He has largely revealed his will unto his people, both in the Old Testament, and in the New. His own character or attributes are therein also plainly set forth. And what will weigh with us to bless his holy name from our inmost souls, if not the account of God which is here given us? That He "is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." What consideration for our frailty, what tenderness to our faults, what forbearance to our frowardness, what absolute pardon to our abominable sins, are here ascribed to the Most High! The distance of east from west, the height of heaven from earth, these are not too much to express the compass of his mercy, the completeness of his pardon. The compassion of a father for his own flesh and blood, this is not too tender a feeling to represent the pity of God towards man. And all this, on the part of One who is eternal, to us who flourish and perish as the shortlived flower of the field! All this is "from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him;" not only as being extended to their children throughout all generations, but also as pertaining to themselves, when the generations of mankind shall cease to follow each other in succession, and when God shall make this mortal put on immortality. Oh, let then all unite to bless the Lord, from whom these blessings flow! Bless Him ye heavenly host of his above. Bless Him ye children of men here on earth. And let every one of us stir up our own selves to join in this universal harmony of praise, saying, "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul."



*The psalmist praiseth God for the works of creation.*

- 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
- 2 Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
- 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:
- 4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:
- 5 *Who* laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed for ever.
- 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.
- 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.
- 8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.
- 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.
- 10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, *which* run among the hills.
- 11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.
- 12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* sing among the branches.
- 13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
- 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;
- 15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.
- 16 The trees of the LORD are full of *sap*; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
- 17 Where the birds make their nests: *as for* the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.
- 18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats; *and* the rocks for the conies.

## LECTURE 949.

*The glory of God manifested in his works.*

The figurative language, at the commencement of this sublime psalm, seems to be taken from the parts of the tabernacle, or from circumstances connected with the tabernacle services. The putting on of the consecrated robes by the high priest suggests the notion of God's clothing Himself "with honour and majesty," and covering Himself "with light as with a garment." The hangings of the sacred tent are referred to in the stretching out "the heavens like a curtain." Its beams too, and its foundations, each supply an image, wherewith to describe God's abode and workmanship in the heavens and in the earth. Whilst after the

manner of its ministers, the priests and Levites there officiating, God is waited on by angels, spirits that fly swift as fire to execute his will.

Usually, we know, the tabernacle, with all that belonged to it, ought to be understood as typical of God's most gracious dealings, in the redemption of mankind by Christ. And yet it might also aptly furnish illustration of God's marvellous work in creating this goodly world which we see around us. And greatly should we err, and overlook the purport of many striking passages in Scripture, if we were to be so engrossed with the tidings of our own salvation, as never, or scarcely ever, to give heed to the manifestation of God's great glory, in the things which his hand has made. Light, what a wonderworking thing is this! How many things besides light itself, how many beauties, and uses, of God's works, were brought into being, when these words were spoken, "Let there be light!" Gen. 1. 3. The waters too, both those above the firmament, and those below, the winged winds, the genial influence of heat, and the fierce agency of fire, how many subjects of reverent admiration do these present to us! Next view the solid earth, which neither waters, winds, nor flames, are able to move from its foundations. Behold it at first covered by the waters of the deep, see the waves thereof gradually retire, and the mountains lift up their heads. Then again, observe the springs of waters forced up to the tops of the hills, and running down by the valleys unto their appointed place in the ocean. What wonderful provision is here made, to slake the thirst of beasts that do man service, and of birds that sing for his delight among the branches of the trees! And how plentifully are the topmost springs from time to time replenished from God's storehouse in the clouds; whereby the earth also is happily refreshed, its fruitfulness is nourished, its herbage made to grow, its bread and wine and oil are multiplied, for the increase of man's strength, gladness, and comeliness, whilst by the same means its forests of God's planting are filled from time to time with sap, the dwelling places of birds both small and great, like as are also the hills and rocks for beasts of various tribes. Such is the order, grandeur, beauty, of God's handywork on earth! Such is its fitness for the abode of man, its shortlived tenant! O heavenly Maker of this earth which we inhabit, if such be thy skill bestowed upon the home of mortal men, what must be the excellency of the court of heaven! What must be the brightness of glory that shines throughout the realms where angels dwell, and where Thou art Thyself enthroned!

*The psalmist further praiseth God for his works.*

- 19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.
- 20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
- 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.
- 22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.
- 23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.
- 24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.
- 25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.
- 26 There go the ships: *there is* that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play therein.
- 27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.
- 28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
- 29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
- 30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.
- 31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.
- 32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
- 33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
- 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.
- 35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

## LECTURE 950.

*The fruit of meditating much on God's wonderful works.*

Among the wonderful works of God, the moon, and its changes, so generally used of old for the regulation of time, are here pointed out to our attention. These are objects to be admired when the sun goes down. And the setting of the sun, so regularly, that it seems to know its proper time, is another subject of thankful admiration. Then go forth the wild beasts of the forest, prompted by the instinct, which God has implanted in them, to seek their food when man is most inclined to rest. And then again, when "the sun ariseth," they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. For it is now the turn of man to wake, and to labour for his daily bread. So well filled up is every part of time! So many and so various are the works of God! So wisely has He made them all! So full is all the earth of his wise workmanship! The great wide ocean also is no



less fully replenished than the land. "There go the ships;" and that which seems to be a barrier between one nation and another, proves to be the very easiest and best of pathways, alike for men, and for the things which they exchange with one another. And there also are multitudes of living creatures, fed amply in that barren waste as it appears, fed amply, and multiplying prodigiously, and sporting happily in the waters of the deep. And who is it that there supplies their wants? who but He, who at the first gave them the breath of life, and who fills all things with plenteousness. If He hide away his face they are troubled, and they perish in countless multitudes. If He send forth his spirit, they are created anew, even as the face of the earth is year by year renewed under the power of his almighty hand. They change, but He endures always the same. They live, and die, and are succeeded by generation after generation. But God abides continually. His glory is unchangeable. His rejoicing in his works knows no drawback and no end. Glory redounds to Him, even from those of his mighty workings, which are most apt to fill us with alarm: as the earthquake, or trembling of the earth at his looks, the volcano, or smoking of the mountains at his touch.

Let then this great glory of the Lord, in the works of his creative power, be to us a matter of rejoicing, and a subject of our songs of praise. Let it be a topic on which we often meditate; for if we do so, our meditation will be sweet, and we shall feel "glad in the Lord." We shall learn to acquiesce contentedly, or rather to rejoice thankfully, in all that is done, ordered, commanded, promised, and even threatened, by One who is so manifestly almighty, all wise, all good. Instead of longing to commit sin, or seeking to justify sinners, we shall be prepared to join in his sentence, that all such ought to be consumed out of a world, which He has made so excellent, and filled so full with goodness. We shall heartily wish, that the wicked were no more, by wishing that they would repent, and turn themselves to God. And whilst we call upon our own souls to bless the Lord, we shall be prompted by our fervent admiration of his works, and devout adoration of Himself, to call upon all others whom our words can reach, and whom our influence will weigh with, saying, Praise ye the Lord.

*The psalmist calleth on God's people to praise Him.*

- 1 O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.
- 2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.
- 3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.
- 4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.
- 5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
- 6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.
- 7 He *is* the LORD our God: his judgments *are* in all the earth.
- 8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.
- 9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;
- 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel for an everlasting covenant:
- 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:
- 12 When there were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.
- 13 When they went from one nation to another, from *one* kingdom to another people;
- 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes;
- 15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.
- 16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.
- 17 He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant:
- 18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:
- 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.
- 20 The king sent and loosed him; *even* the ruler of the people, and let him go free.
- 21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:
- 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

## LECTURE 951.

*Our being God's people should move us to praise Him.*

Though there is no title to this psalm, we know that the first part of it, as far as verse fifteen, was written by David; for we find it, in nearly the same words, recorded in the First Book of Chronicles, as having been delivered by David to Asaph, when he had brought the ark unto mount Sion. See 1 Chron. 16. 8—22. And as it is not likely that any one would add to David's writing except himself, we may conclude that the whole psalm is of his composition. He calls upon the Israelites to praise the Lord in many ways; by giving Him thanks, by calling on his name, by

publishing abroad his mighty works, by singing psalms unto Him, by conversing with one another on the subject of his marvellous acts, by glorying in his holy name, by seeking the Lord, and his strength, and his face, his present grace, and the sight of Him hereafter in glory, and by rejoicing in Him from the heart.

And especially would David have the Israelites, as God's chosen people, call to mind, and commemorate with thankfulness, both the works which He had wrought, and the words which He had revealed, for their benefit in particular, according to his gracious covenant; being more especially the Lord their God, whilst yet He was the God also of all the earth. The vouchsafing to enter into covenant with them at all was a great mercy. The confirming that covenant by a written revelation was a great mercy. The remembering it throughout so many successive generations was a great mercy. The providential protection, which in virtue of that covenant God extended to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their appointed wanderings from land to land, this also was a great mercy. So too was God's overruling the jealousy and cruelty of Joseph's brethren, whereby Joseph became the means of providing sustenance for the whole family of Jacob, in a time of long continued dearth. And so were the many singular circumstances connected with Joseph's advancement to the place of highest office under Pharaoh king of Egypt; all proving the care that God was pleased to take for the safety of his people, and at the same time shewing the provision which He made for proving them, and trying them, and preparing them, by the lessons of adversity, for enjoying the good things which He had promised to give them.

David would have the Israelites ever bear these things in mind; more especially because they were the people of the Lord, his chosen people, under the covenant of the Law. And are not we the Lord's people now, his chosen people, under the covenant of the Gospel? And shall not we therefore thankfully call to mind God's mercies of old time, vouchsafed to Abraham our father, to Abraham and his seed after him by descent of faith, yea, vouchsafed to us as Abraham's children, inheritors of the promises which God made to him? The thousand generations, to which his promises as well as his commandments extend, are not yet exhausted; neither will be while the world endures. And the rest after their pilgrimage, which He promised that his people should enjoy, is yet to be enjoyed in a better country, than any which this world contains. And the works which He has done, and the words which He has spoken, with a view to our admission into rest in heaven, far exceed all the marvels of his work and word, which ushered his people into Canaan upon the earth. These things then let us oftentimes remember. For these things let us heartily give thanks to God; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



*The psalmist rehearses more of God's mercies.*

23 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

26 He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.

31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts.

32 He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land.

33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.

34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillers, and that without number,

35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

36 He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength.

37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and *there was not one feeble person among their tribes.*

38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.

39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river.

42 For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

43 And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness:

44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

#### LECTURE 952.

*That God in redeeming us has a view to our obedience.*

Here are many instances of God's goodness to his chosen people, thankfully commemorated, with a view to stirring up his people to give Him thanks. When their forefathers had been brought down into Egypt, God increased their numbers exceedingly, "and made them stronger than their enemies." He then so ordered it, that the Egyptians behaved to them oppressively; and that Moses and Aaron had ample opportunity, through the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, to shew signs and wonders among them. These miracles, the plagues of Egypt, though severe

chastisements well deserved by the Egyptians, were instances of God's goodness to the Israelites, as well as manifestations of his glory in the face of their idolatrous oppressors. The total darkness which He sent was no hinderance to those who were obedient to his word; for "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." *Exod.* 10. 23. And the like was the case with the plague of flies, of which the Lord said unto Moses, "I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there." *Exod.* 8. 22. But chiefly was this broad distinction manifest, in the most awful plague of all, the smiting of the first born of Egypt dead in one night, and the passing over the houses of the Israelites. So great was the advantage of those who rebelled not against the word of the Lord! So miserable was the case of those who disbelieved and disobeyed it!

And what was the intent of God in all these merciful dealings with his people? what was his gracious will in their behalf, that they should do, for all the benefits He did for them? With a view to what return did He so signally bring them forth, laden with the spoil of the Egyptians, terrible to their enemies, and whole in health and strength themselves? It was that they might observe his statutes; for this He saved them from their enemies, for this He led them day and night by the pillar of a cloud and of fire, for this He gave them to eat quails and manna, and to drink water out of the opened rock; for this He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant, for this He brought forth his people in triumph, and put them in possession of the lands and labours of the heathen; not only for his own truth and righteousness sake, not only for the manifestation of his own glory in the redemption of his people, but for this also, "that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws." May we, who are now his people, ever bear in mind this great object of God, in redeeming us, by his Son our Saviour Christ! May we ever make Him this best return we can, inadequate indeed, yea, infinitely below the worth of that which He has done for us, yet the best return we can, this namely, that we obey his will, that we do according to his word, that we shew forth his praise, at once with our lips, and with our lives! "Praise ye the Lord." Praise Him thus, ye for whom Christ died. Praise Him thus, ye whose life is ransomed by the death of God's only begotten Son. Praise ye the Lord, not only by celebrating his goodness with thankful lips, but also by observing his statutes, and by keeping his commandments.

*The psalmist pointeth out the forbearance of God.*

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. O at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.  
 give thanks unto the LORD; 8 Nevertheless he saved them  
 for *he is* good: for his mercy for his name's sake, that he  
*endureth* for ever. might make his mighty power  
 to be known.
- 2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can  
 shew forth all his praise? 9 He rebuked the Red sea al-  
 so, and it was dried up: so he  
 led them through the depths,  
 as through the wilderness.
- 3 Blessed *are* they that keep judgment, *and* he that doeth  
 righteousness at all times. 10 And he saved them from  
 the hand of him that hated  
*them*, and redeemed them from  
 the hand of the enemy.
- 4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bear-  
 est* unto thy people: O visit me  
 with thy salvation; 11 And the waters covered  
 their enemies: there was not  
 one of them left.
- 5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice  
 in the gladness of thy nation, 12 Then believed they his  
 words; they sang his praise.
- 6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed in-  
 iquity, we have done wickedly. 13 They soon forgot his works;  
 they waited not for his counsel:
- 7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt: they re-  
 membered not the multitude of 14 But lusted exceedingly in  
 the wilderness, and tempted  
 God in the desert.
- thy mercies; but provoked *him* 15 And he gave them their re-  
 quest; but sent leanness into  
 their soul.

## LECTURE 953.

*God's mercifulness to us in our backslidings.*

The first verse of this psalm, and the last two verses of it, occur in the First Book of Chronicles, as part of the song of praise which David gave to Asaph when the ark was removed. See 1 Chron. 16. 34—36. They probably there stand for the whole psalm; and so prove that the whole was of David's composition. It appears that the chief object of the psalmist was to shew how signally God's mercy and forbearance had been extended to his chosen people, notwithstanding their many grievous backslidings. And as we read or hear it, we shall do well to call to mind the many instances, in which we have ourselves fallen away from our holy purposes, and from God's good grace given us; that we may be the more inclined to praise Him for his goodness, in this, that we have not fallen away unto perdition. For as there is nothing more marvellous to think of, than that God, being so altogether holy as He is, should bear with sinners so vile as most of us have been; so is there nothing the thought of which is more likely to make us feel deeply thankful, and to



make us ask thankfully with David, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?"

Before entering upon the subject of God's mercifulness to sinners, David first declares the blessedness of those who "keep judgment," and do "righteousness at all times." This is the greatest blessedness of all, these the most blessed of the children of men. But next to these we may count those of whom David thus speaks in another Psalm, "Blessed is he, whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Ps. 32. 1. In either case, we may consider that God regards us with the favour which He bears unto his people; that He visits us with his salvation. In either case we may ask of Him, not doubting that He hears our prayer, and will grant our humble petition, to make us partakers of the privileges and joys which are the lot of his chosen nation, to let us share in the glory of his inheritance.

David owns for himself and for the Israelites, that they could plead for these inestimable benefits only in the character of sinners mercifully forgiven. "We have sinned," he says, "with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." And then he begins to recount the backslidings of Israel in the time of Moses, mentioning their forgetfulness of God's miracles wrought in Egypt, their disobedient murmurings when overtaken by Pharaoh at the Red Sea. See Exod. 14. 10—12. Notwithstanding which tokens of unfaithfulness, God was pleased to save them for his name's sake, to save them, and to overwhelm their enemies. And yet how soon after their thankful acknowledgment of this most signal mercy, did they again forget his works, and prove impatient and distrustful of his providence! See Exod. 15. 24. How soon did they tempt God in the wilderness, by loathing the food which He gave them, and lusting after that which He withheld! See Num. 11. 4. And how fearfully did He at once comply with their request, and chastise them for their discontent! Longsuffering as He is, how plainly did He prove, in this and many another instance, that He will not spare the guilty! God forbid that we should presume on his forbearance, and forget how often his wrath was kindled even against his chosen people! God grant, that the more we rejoice in being numbered among the elect people of God, we may so much the more covet the blessedness of those who do "righteousness at all times!"

*The psalmist dwelleth on the backslidings of Israel.*

- 16 They envied Moses also in word :  
the camp, *and* Aaron the saint  
of the LORD.
- 17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.
- 18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.
- 19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.
- 20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.
- 21 They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;
- 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red sea.
- 23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.
- 24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his
- 25 But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.
- 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:
- 27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.
- 28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.
- 29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.
- 30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.
- 31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.
- 32 They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
- 33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

## LECTURE 954.

*The connexion of God's justice and mercifulness.*

It is remarkable, that whilst the chief object of this psalm is to celebrate the mercifulness of God, exercised towards his backsliding people, yet many instances are mentioned, in which He chastised them severely for their sins; as if to teach us, that his goodness and longsuffering is not to be taken for a token that He does not abominate iniquity, is not to be presumed on as a proof that He will not most fearfully punish the wicked. Is any one then tempted to envy those, to whom God has given his commission and authority to teach and to rule his people? Would any one presume to encroach upon their office, and to despise their ministrations? Let such men think of the earth opening its mouth, to swallow up Dathan and Abiram. Let them remember how a fire came out from the Lord, and consumed all *the company of Korah*. See Num. 16. 32—35.

Again, would any dare so thanklessly to forget "God their saviour," as to idolize any creature which He has made, to set their affections on things on the earth, and to put their trust in corruptible riches, the nearest approach to idolatry that our pride of reason will allow us to make, with our present amount of knowledge? Let such consider, how God proposed to consume at one blow the whole nation of the Israelites, when "they made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image." Let them remember, that though by the intercession of Moses He was prevailed upon to spare them, yet it was not without this fearful reservation, "nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them." *Exod. 32. 34.* And in like manner, when the people, instead of trusting in God's word, were alarmed by the unfavourable report of those whom they had sent to view the promised land, God resolved that they should all die in the wilderness, and never set foot in Canaan at all. See *Num. 13. 14.* A fearful warning to those of us, who disbelieve the assurance which God has given us of the happiness of heaven; and who distrust his ability and willingness to guide us to the realms of bliss. Even Moses himself was not spared the like chastisement, when guilty of the like sin of unbelief. See *Num. 20. 12.* And as to those who joined themselves to Baal-peor, in acts of idolatry and impurity, it was not till the zeal of Phineas, in executing judgment according to the law, proved that there was yet faith and love in Israel, it was not till then that the plague was stayed, by which more than twenty thousand of the people perished. See *Num. 31.*

God then is One who not only threatens punishment, but also executes judgment. And this He is, although He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent and be saved. And perhaps if we could rightly view this matter, his mercifulness would be the very thing above all others to make us afraid of provoking his judgments. Whilst on the other hand, his abhorrence of iniquity, and the severity with which He has been seen to chastise and destroy the wicked, would so much the more raise our conception of his goodness, kindness, and mercifulness, in being constantly willing to forgive. For what must be the force put upon that indignation, which perfect justice and perfect holiness cannot but feel against sin, in the act of forgiveness? What must be the transcendent power of love, in a Being altogether holy, and altogether just, who notwithstanding freely forgives sinners?



*The psalmist blesseth the long suffering God of Israel.*

- 34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:  
 35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.  
 36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.  
 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.  
 38 And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.  
 39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.  
 40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.  
 41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them.
- 42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.  
 43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.  
 44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry:  
 45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.  
 46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.  
 47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.  
 48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

## LECTURE 955.

*Of praising God whilst yet in captivity to sin.*

When the children of Israel, after all their trials, and all their chastisements, were at length settled by God's good providence in the promised land of Canaan, with a revealed law for their guidance, as well as a consecrated priesthood, and with Jehovah Himself for their King, we should expect to find, that under these most favourable circumstances, they were constantly faithful and obedient. But, alas! we read in the Book of Judges a history very different from this reasonable expectation. We find there that they did not cut off the nations of Canaan, as God had commanded them; but that having spared them, and living in the midst of them, they were ensnared into the practice of their gross idolatries, and superstitious cruelties. We find, that though when God slew them for their sins, they turned them unto Him, and repented, yet they again and again fell into transgression. See *Judges*, 2. 2. 3. 3. 8. 6. 3. 10. 6. 13. 1. And on God's part,

though He repeatedly brought them low for their iniquity, still we find, that "he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." And we are here further informed, that "he made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives."

This was the case to a very remarkable degree in after times, the times of the Babylonish captivity; so much so, that many think this portion of the Psalm before us cannot but refer to that period. Hence they argue also, that the psalm must have been written in the times of the captivity; and that it is in the name of the captives that the psalmist prays, "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise." But it is not unlikely that the passage may refer to the captivity in Babylon, and yet have been written long before that captivity took place. And as we know that the two last verses were written by David, see 1 Chron. 16. 35, 36, we may conclude that he wrote the whole; and that he wrote prophetically of God's people being scattered among the heathen, and prayed prophetically that God would save them, and again gather them together.

The prayer and praise, with which the psalm concludes, prove the faith which the psalmist felt in the mercy and longsuffering on which he had been enlarging. He speaks as one well assured, that greatly as God's forbearance had been tried, it was not yet exhausted; and that justly as God might see fit to scatter his people among the heathen for their sins, He might yet be prevailed upon by prayer to gather them again together, that they might again give thanks unto his holy name, and triumph in his praise. And as if anticipating this happy consummation, he breaks out into the utterance of thanks and praises: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord." This may be our warrant for continuing to praise God each day of our lives, even though we may frequently feel in our own consciences that we need rather to confine our devotions to the confession of our sins, and to supplication for pardon. We are suffering, it may be, like God's people of old, in some sore captivity, brought on us by our own transgressions. We are tied and bound by the chain of our sins; and seem as if it ill became us to draw nigh to God with any other language than the prayer that He would let the pitifulness of his great mercy loose us. But at such a moment we may learn from David, to praise God, as if He had loosed us. We may comply with his exhortation, "Praise ye the Lord," as though we were already free. And having faith in his promises, whereby we enjoy the substance of things hoped for, we may join, out of the depth of our affliction, in saying "Amen," to the words of joy and thankfulness; "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting."

*The psalmist exhorteth us to praise God for his providence.*

- 1 O give thanks unto the LORD, their heart with labour; they  
for he is good: for his mercy  
endureth for ever.
- 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath re-  
deemed from the hand of the  
enemy:
- 3 And gathered them out of  
the lands from the east, and  
from the west, from the north,  
and from the south.
- 4 They wandered in the wil-  
derness in a solitary way; they  
found no city to dwell in.
- 5 Hungry and thirsty, their  
soul fainted in them.
- 6 Then they cried unto the  
LORD in their trouble, and he  
delivered them out of their dis-  
tresses.
- 7 And he led them forth by  
the right way, that they might  
go to a city of habitation.
- 8 Oh that men would praise  
the LORD for his goodness, and  
for his wonderful works to the  
children of men!
- 9 For he satisfieth the longing  
soul, and filleth the hungry soul  
with goodness.
- 10 Such as sit in darkness and  
in the shadow of death, being  
bound in affliction and iron:
- 11 Because they rebelled a-  
gainst the words of God, and  
contemned the counsel of the  
most High:
- 12 Therefore he brought down
- 13 Then they cried unto the  
LORD in their trouble, and he  
saved them out of their dis-  
tresses.
- 14 He brought them out of  
darkness and the shadow of  
death, and brake their bands in  
sunder.
- 15 Oh that men would praise  
the LORD for his goodness, and  
for his wonderful works to the  
children of men!
- 16 For he hath broken the  
gates of brass, and cut the bars  
of iron in sunder.
- 17 Fools because of their trans-  
gression, and because of their  
iniquities, are afflicted.
- 18 Their soul abhorreth all  
manner of meat; and they draw  
near unto the gates of death.
- 19 Then they cry unto the  
LORD in their trouble, and he  
saveth them out of their dis-  
tresses.
- 20 He sent his word, and healed  
them, and delivered them from  
their destructions.
- 21 Oh that men would praise  
the LORD for his goodness, and  
for his wonderful works to the  
children of men!
- 22 And let them sacrifice the  
sacrifices of thanksgiving, and  
declare his works with rejoicing.

#### LECTURE 956.

*Instances of God's delivering men out of trouble.*

How little does this seem for us to do, considering how much God has done for us! And yet how few are willing to do this little service unto God, to "sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing!" Let us, for our parts, do this frequently. And for the present let us be guided



by the psalmist, in choosing which of all God's works we will declare, at once with gladness and with thankfulness. Behold then his love manifested to his people when they were dispersed in the land of their captivity. See them wandering in a wilderness, without a home, without food, without strength, or spirits. Into such a situation his people of old oftentimes were brought by their transgressions, and out of it were as oftentimes delivered, when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble. In the like destitution and danger have his people in after times frequently been placed. But what church, nay, what single Christian, has ever turned to God in earnest, and sought his grace with tears of penitence, and with prayers of faith, that has not in God's good time been delivered from trouble, and filled with goodness?

Next let us turn to the case of captives confined in the prison-house of their enemies. Many such cases doubtless were well known in the times when this psalm was written; when it was no uncommon thing, for prisoners taken in war to be confined with such extreme cruelty, that they might fitly be described as being "bound in affliction and iron." The Israelites, for their sins, were often given up by God, to become a prey unto their enemies, and they therefore often experienced this severity of imprisonment. In the Book of Judges we read of many such calamities befalling them, and usually soon afterwards we find, that "they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." And so is He ever ready to save us from the bondage of iniquity, from the chains of those sins to which we have ourselves given power to hurt us. And what is it short of bringing us "out of darkness and the shadow of death;" if He enables us to deny ourselves, to mortify the sinful lusts of the flesh, and to renounce the allurements of this wicked world?

Once more, let us note the visitation of plague or pestilence, sent in chastisement for sin against God; as in the case of those who abetted the rebellion of Korah; see Num. 16. 46—48; or in the case of David's numbering the people. See 2 Sam. 24. 10—15. Here too the sin of man provokes the affliction, the arm of God administers it, and the prayer of the afflicted prevails with the Almighty to save them out of their distresses. Who that has ever lived in a place visited by pestilence can forget the alarm and anxiety, the tears, and groans, and supplications, which were there continually to be met with? Who that has become sensible of the plague of his own sinful heart, who will not much more cry to God for help in this most sore distress, and much more, give Him thanks for deliverance out of it?

*The psalmist directs us to note God's providential dealings.*

23 They that go down to the wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground ;

24 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

25 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

26 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation ;

27 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

28 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly ; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

29 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

30 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

31 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

32 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice : and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

33 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

34 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly ; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

35 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

36 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

37 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

38 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice : and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

39 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

40 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice : and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

41 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice : and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

43 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

## LECTURE 957.

*Men the authors of their misery, God their Deliverer.*

It is our wisdom, the psalmist tells us, to ponder these things ; it is our way to understand the loving kindness of the Lord. They are not cases of every day occurrence. The calamities and deliverances set before us in this psalm are not such as happen commonly or to most men. Rather they are cases of extreme distress, of very imminent danger, such as it harrows up our souls to hear of. A nation in captivity, the captives in a dark dungeon, a visitation of pestilence, a ship in jeopardy in a storm at sea ;

things like these are extreme cases, but cases of proportionate interest to our feelings. And they are therefore cases, in which the wonderful deliverances wrought for man, by almighty God, ought to fill our hearts with a proportionate conviction of his great power and goodness. And certainly if in any case it be possible to realize in our minds the horrors of such situations as these, without having experienced the reality, it must be after reviewing the account here set before us of a storm at sea, and of the dismay of those who are overtaken therein. Oh may this lively picture serve us for a warning and memorial, that whether we live on land, or go down to the sea on shipboard, we have to pass through the stormy waves of this troublesome world, and that it is only by crying faithfully unto the Lord in our troubles, that we can hope to be brought in safety, to the haven where we fain would be!

Other striking instances here mentioned, in proof of God's great power and goodness, are his dealings with nations and with princes, his making a fruitful land barren, or a barren land fruitful, according to the wickedness or piety of them that dwell therein; his multiplying the people greatly, or minishing them and bringing them low, his making the most mighty potentates objects of scorn through the miserable failure of their mad ambition, and his setting up them that were of low estate in the height of honour and prosperity. These things if we rightly view them, if we ponder on them devoutly, will greatly help us to understand how truly it is said, that "God is love." 1 John 4. 8. The dealings of his providence, though in part inscrutable to us, are in the main a manifestation of the same gracious character, as that which shines throughout the pages of his written word. And not only the history of his people in the Bible, but the history of all the nations in the world, as also the lives and adventures of all mankind that ever lived, if they could be known as they really are and have been, all would alike give cause of joy to the righteous, and alike stop the mouth of the gainsayer; all would unite to teach us the same heavenly lesson of the lovingkindness of the Lord.

May we ever bear this truth in view, in studying, as we have opportunity, not only God's word, and not only his works, but also the history, and habits, the pursuits, perils, successes, and reverses, of all conditions of mankind! May we ever have grace to see, and to acknowledge, with thankfulness unto God, that whilst all their misery is brought on men by their own fault, all their deliverance is wrought for them by the Lord!



*David triumpheth over his foes.*

*A Song of Praise of David.*

<p>1. <i>God my heart is fixed:</i>  <i>I will sing and give praise</i>  <i>even with my guitar.</i>  <i>I will praise thee, O Lord,</i>  <i>among the people, and I will</i>  <i>sing praises unto thee among</i>  <i>the nations.</i>  <i>For thy mercy is great above</i>  <i>the heavens, and thy truth</i>  <i>extended unto the clouds.</i>  <i>Be thou exalted, O God,</i>  <i>above the heavens, and thy</i>  <i>glory above all the earth.</i>  <i>Thy righteousness may be</i>  <i>revelated, sure, with thy right</i>  <i>hand, and answer me.</i>  <i>God hath showed in his be-</i>  <i>lieves: I will requite, I will</i> </p>	<p><i>ride Succoth, and mete out the</i>  <i>valley of Succoth.</i>  <i>Gilead is mine; Manasse</i>  <i>is mine; Ephraim also is the</i>  <i>strength of mine head; Judah</i>  <i>is my lawgiver;</i>  <i>Moad is my washpot; over</i>  <i>Edom will I cast out my shoe;</i>  <i>over Philistia will I triumph.</i>  <i>Who will bring me into the</i>  <i>strong city? who will lead me</i>  <i>into Edom?</i>  <i>Wilt not thou, O God, who</i>  <i>hast cast us off? and wilt not thou,</i>  <i>O God, go forth with our hosts?</i>  <i>Give us help from trouble:</i>  <i>for vain is the help of man.</i>  <i>Through God we shall do</i>  <i>valiantly: for he it is that shall</i>  <i>tread down our enemies.</i> </p>
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## LECTURE 958.

*How we may triumph without presumption.*

THIS psalm is made up of parts taken from two others, namely from the fifty seventh, and from the sixtieth. According to the titles, all three psalms are of David's composition. It is therefore probable, that he saw fit, on some particular occasion, to make use of the words of prayer and praise to which he had previously given utterance, and so to frame together these two portions of psalms as that they might be taken for a new and distinct composition. Let us therefore observe with care the connexion between the beginning and the ending of this psalm. In the beginning, which is the same as the end of the fifty seventh, David declares his resolution to glorify God. In the latter part, which is the same as the end of the sixtieth, he both triumphs in his success over the enemies of Israel, and ascribes it to the good providence of God. Hence let us learn that when we have ground for triumphing over the enemies of our souls, we ought to be careful, at the same time, to give all the glory of our success unto God who gives us the victory.

But in what sense can it ever become sinful men, as the very best of men own themselves to be, to triumph at all? What Sichem can we boast of dividing, what valley of Succoth can we resolve to mete out? What Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and

Judah, can we claim as our own? What Moab, Edom, and Philistia can we defy with scorn, and trample under foot? Perhaps we shall not be wide of the spirit of this passage, as far as it is applicable to Christians in general, if we apply it as follows: "God hath spoken in his holiness;" and his words as such as these, "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. 12. 9. In reliance on that grace I will rejoice, I will enter into possession of my Christian privileges, and undertake the work of my Christian warfare, not with despondency, but with a cheerful hope, and with a good courage. I will rejoice and partition out, and appropriate to myself, the graces of a Christian life. Grasping by the hold of faith, I will claim truth as mine, and purity as mine, and self denial as mine, and humility as mine. Nay, more, I will venture in humble reliance on the encouraging invitations of the Gospel, to claim Christ Himself as mine, my Strength, my Lawgiver, my Lord, my Saviour, and my God. And as to all my sinful lusts, I will esteem them for vile as in reality they are, I will loathe them, renounce them, abhor them, and by the good help of God break down the strong holds of the Edom that is in my heart, and triumph over the Philistia which besets me in the world.

There is ample warrant in Scripture, for faith to adopt this triumphant tone, however rarely it may be met with amongst those who pass for God's faithful people. It may be enough to mention a single passage, the exhortation of St. James, that we should count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. See Jas. 1. 2. But the more we endeavour to fulfil this precept, let us so much the more be on our guard against being led into presumption. And let us be assured that there is no better safeguard against this most perilous snare, than a habit of constantly ascribing all our spiritual successes to the almighty arm of the Lord. It is easy to say, that of course we could not succeed without God's help. We must do more, we must really reckon in our hearts that it is He who helps us, and that it is to Him that we are indebted for the courage to do valiantly for ourselves. And we shall find nothing more largely assist us in feeling this constantly than a habit of praying to God for help in every contest we commence, and ascribing to God the praise of all such success as we obtain. To be often asking, and often thanking, will keep us mindful that we are always dependent. And we may triumph heartily, without risk of vain glory or presumption, as long as we observe these two rules of the apostle, "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks." 1 Thess. 5. 17, 18.

*David's prayer for aid to avert his enemies.*

*1. In the language of a Psalm of David.*

- Hold not thy peace : *1* ~~that~~ <sup>there</sup> be any to ~~know~~ <sup>know</sup> his fatherless children.
- 2* ~~Of the mouth of the wicked~~ <sup>Let his posterity be cut off;</sup>  
~~and the mouth of the deceitful~~ <sup>and in the generation following</sup>  
~~are opened against me~~ <sup>let their name be blasted</sup>  
~~they have slandered against me~~ <sup>and</sup>  
~~with a lying tongue.~~ <sup>Let the inquiry of his fathers</sup>  
<sup>be remembered with the Lord :</sup>  
<sup>and let not the sin of his mother be blasted out.</sup>
- 3* ~~They compassed me about~~ <sup>Let them be before the Lord continually,</sup>  
~~and with words of hatred~~ <sup>that he may cut off the memory of them</sup>  
~~and without cause.~~ <sup>from the earth.</sup>
- 4* ~~For my love they are my adversaries~~ <sup>Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,</sup>  
~~but I give myself unto them.~~ <sup>persecuted the poor and needy man,</sup>  
<sup>that he might even slay the broken in heart.</sup>
- 5* ~~But they have rewarded me evil for good~~ <sup>As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him :</sup>  
~~and hatred for my love.~~ <sup>as he delighted not in blessing,</sup>  
<sup>so let it be far from him.</sup>
- 6* ~~For thou O wicked man~~ <sup>As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment,</sup>  
~~art not as I : for thou standest at his right hand.~~ <sup>so let it come into his bowels like water,</sup>  
<sup>and like oil into his bones.</sup>
- 7* ~~When he shall be judged,~~ <sup>Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him,</sup>  
~~let him be condemned :~~ <sup>and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.</sup>  
<sup>Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord,</sup>  
<sup>and of them that speak evil against my soul.</sup>
- 8* ~~Let his days be few :~~ <sup>Let his children be fatherless,</sup>  
<sup>and his wife a widow.</sup>
- 9* ~~Let his children be continually vagabonds,~~ <sup>Let his children be continually vagabonds,</sup>  
<sup>and beg : let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.</sup>
- 10* ~~Let the extortioner catch all that he hath ;~~ <sup>Let the extortioner catch all that he hath ;</sup>  
<sup>and let the strangers spoil his labour.</sup>
- 11* ~~Let there be none to extend mercy unto him :~~ <sup>Let there be none to extend mercy unto him :</sup>  
<sup>neither let</sup>

LECTURE 959.

*The inspired language of imprecation accounted for.*

This is one of the psalms of which a considerable part is in the form of an imprecation, anathema, or curse. David prays to God, whom he addresses as the God of his praise, or the God whom he was in the habit of praising; and begs Him to interfere in his behalf against his enemies; saying, "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise." He then sets forth the ill treatment he had met in the persons against whom he prays. They had



spoken evil of him falsely. And besides compassing him about with words of hatred, they had fought against him without a cause. In return for his love they hated him, and rewarded him evil for good. Whereupon he gave himself, as he states, to prayer. And his prayer, as far as his enemies are concerned, is a request that God would visit them with a great variety of the most terrible judgments which man can suffer in this present life.

Many persons indeed desire here to make it appear, that these prayers ought to have been translated rather as prophecies; that it ought to be expressed thus, God will do such and such things, instead of, Let God do them. But what need is there for any such alteration? Is it not God's word that we are studying? And shall we presume to frame excuses for any thing which He may have seen fit to have set down therein? And what difference does it make of any real importance, whether the word of God be spoken by a man of God in the form of prophecy, or in the form of prayer? Of whatsoever God has told us that it shall be, it is surely our duty to pray that it may be. Even we ourselves daily ask of God, "Thy kingdom come;" though we cannot do so without in reality asking Him to hasten the time, when He will execute judgments far more terrible than any which are here mentioned on all impenitent evil doers. How much more might one who was a prophet, and who prayed in these psalms as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, pray to God for the punishment of the ungodly!

Even if we could confine these imprecations to David's own enemies, to those who fought against him as king, or against the people whose king he was, we need not think it strange that he should be commissioned to pray for their destruction, since we consider that he was commissioned to fight against them, and destroy them. But we know that other enemies are here signified. We find St. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, apply part of this imprecation to the traitor Judas. See Acts 1. 20. Whence we have good reason to conclude, that as David was a type of Christ, so his enemies were typical of Christ's enemies; and that his prayer for their desolation and destruction was directed against those wicked and cruel men, who hated, persecuted, and put to death our blessed Lord. It was no doubt meet, that there should be on record this awful testimony, as a warning beforehand against those, who should be tempted to such dreadful sins; and as a warning to us also of the great sinfulness of reviling or hating Christ and his Gospel. But lest we should think to derive hence any warrant for harbouring in our own hearts hard thoughts, or unkind wishes, against those who have used us ill, our Lord has left us a pattern for our conduct, in the prayer which He used Himself, when dying, in behalf of those who nailed Him to the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23. 34.

*David beseecheth God to help him in his trouble.*

- 21 But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.
- 22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.
- 23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.
- 24 My knees are weak through fasting: and my flesh filleth of hunger.
- 25 I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads.
- 26 Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy:
- 27 That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, Lord, hast done it.
- 28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.
- 29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.
- 30 I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.
- 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

### LECTURE 960.

*A prophetic lamentation of Christ and his church.*

THAT JESUS and the persecutors of Christ are pointed out in the first part of this psalm, under the words spoken by David of his enemies, is evident from the manner in which St. Peter applies a part of one verse in particular. See ver. 8. and Acts 1. 20. Hence it follows, that in David's prayer for God's blessings to himself, and in his account of his own pitiable estate, we are warranted in understanding a prophetic lamentation on the part or on the behalf of Jesus Christ, so emphatically described by another prophet as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Is. 53. 3. When we remember that our Lord was the eternal Son of the eternal Father, and so intimately united with the Father as to say, "I and my Father are one," John 10. 30, we have no small difficulty in conceiving of Him as being at the same time truly man. Perhaps nothing is more fit to help us in arriving at our minds to this important point in Christian doctrine than the manner which the Gospel gives us of his praying. His prayer always implies dependency on the person to whom it is addressed. And in this point of view, this portion of the psalm before us is an important testimony to the truth of our Saviour's true human nature.

Let us remember then that in these words we have an account of the man of Him who described his own destitute condition by saying, "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matt.

8. 20. Let us see in them a most exact prophecy of that which took place when Christ was crucified, and when "they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Matt. 27. 39, 40. Let us hear in them the voice of prayer like that which in Gethsemane was heard to say, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Matt. 26. 39. Let us hear in them the cry of agony, the agony of dying for our sins, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27. 46.

Nor need we confine the import of these prophetic lamentations to that which our Lord suffered, both whilst He was alive, and when He was put to death, in the flesh. They are applicable also to Christ's mystical body the church. How many have been the church's sufferings, how severe its wounds, how deep its destitution, how nigh to a shadow has it been at times reduced, both by the persecution of its open enemies, and by the unfaithfulness of its pretended friends! How has it been tossed up and down by the raging waves of controversy, and worn down to weakness and to leanness by the prevalence of heresy and schism! And how keenly have its enemies reproached it! How triumphantly have they wagged their heads in scorn upon the least prospect of its detriment or dishonour! If we as members of God's church, of Christ's mystical body, feel deeply for its losses, sufferings, wrongs, and reproaches, let us learn to seek their redress first and foremost by committing our cause in prayer to God. Let us pray to Him to help us, and to make it manifest that He is helping us; if it were only for this, that these our enemies, the enemies of the church, and therefore the enemies of God, may know that this is his hand, and that our deliverance is the Lord's doing. Let us pray to God to give us his blessing, infinitely more precious than any curse of theirs can be hurtful. And whilst we would have all their plots and plans, which they devise against God's church, end in shameful discomfiture, let us resolve that we for our parts, instead of taking credit to ourselves in their defeat, will ascribe all the glory unto God. Yea, we will greatly praise God now, whilst we have our being on the earth; and we will strive to become meet to join with those, who shall sound his praise, and also share his glory, in heaven for evermore.

Heavenly Father, defend, we pray Thee, thy holy church on earth from all its enemies. And grant that we thy servants may hereafter share the glory of thy church triumphant in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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MAISON The Court at the right hand

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

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**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The STRAIGHTNESS OF THE WAY TO THE MESSIAH WAS NOT DENIED  
BY THE JEWS WHO WERE ASKING HIM TO HAVE THEM CHRIST MUST BE  
THE SON OF DAVID WHOSE KINGDOM IS IN HEAVEN THEY WERE ASKING THEM,  
“HOW CAN THIS SAY THAT HE IS THE SON OF DAVID SAYING, THE LORD  
SAID UNTO ME, SIT ON MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE THINE  
FOOTSTOOL OF STONES.” MAT. 22. 9-10 In the Epistle to the  
HEBREWS THE SAME VERBS OF THE PSALM ARE BROUGHT FORWARD AS A  
PROOF, THAT JESUS WAS SEATED ABOVE THE ANGELS. SEE HEB. 1. 13.  
HE SAYS OF IT IN THE PLACE OF THE PROPHET, BRINGS THEM TO CHRIST'S  
ASCENDING INTO HEAVEN, AND THERE SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.  
SEE ACTS 7. 55. AND SO PAUL FREQUENTLY REFERS TO THEM, WHEN  
HE SPEAKS OF JESUS WHO MUST REIGN, TILL HE HATH PUT ALL ENEMIES  
UNDER HIS FEET. ROM. 8. 35. THIS FURTHER THEN IS A PROPHECY;  
IT IS A PROMISE FORWARDED IN THE AGGONIZING SWEAT, AND THE PRIEST-  
HOOD OF JESUS. IT IS IN DAVID'S WRITING; BUT IT LIKELY ADMITS OF  
ANY APPLICATION TO DAVID'S CIRCUMSTANCES; SO THAT, THAT ON THIS  
GROUND ALONE WE MIGHT JUSTLY ARGUMENT, THAT DAVID IS HERE REFERRED  
TO SOME ONE ELSE.

THE 12 APOSTLES IN THE TRONICALITY OF THE WORDS OF THE FATHER TO THE SON, WITH PROPHESYING THEM TO THE THRONE WHICH HE OCCUPIES IN HEAVEN, AS HE HATH THE SON OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN. THERE HE IS IN ANCHORING ENCOURAGEMENT, AS SURELY AS GOD'S WORD IS TRUE, THAT ALL HIS ENEMIES SHALL HAVE BEEN PUT UNDER HIS FEET. HOW VAID THEN ARE ALL ARGUMENTS OF OURS TO RESIST HIS WILL! HOW FOOLISH IS THE COURSE OF THOSE MISERABLE MEN, WHO NOW SO LIVE AS TO BE CRUISED FOR HIS ENEMIES! NEXT THE INSPIRED PSALMIST FORETELS, THAT OUT OF ZION SHALL GOD SEND THE SCEPTRE OF MESSIAH'S POWER, THAT THENCE SHOULD GO FORTH THE PREACHERS OF THAT GOSPEL, WHICH

would be the means of establishing Christ's kingdom in the heart of an idolatrous world. Adverse as every circumstance might appear, the iron power of the Roman empire ready to crush the new religion in its birth, and the prejudices of the heathen in favour of their idols being strengthened by their conceit of their own wisdom, as well as backed by the sanction which their false religion gave to their abominable practices, yet was there found a willing people, willing even to lay down their lives for Christ's name's sake; a people whose holiness of life was the ornament of their stedfast faith, and whose willing death proved the power of Christ made perfect in man's weakness; a people whose number was speedily increased, and the glory of their Christian course made bright, like the dew to which the morning gives birth.

But Christ is to this people at once a King and a High Priest. By the solemnity of an oath He has been consecrated, as here revealed, to a priesthood of the same order as that of Melchizedec, who was at once "king of Salem," and "priest of the most high God." Gen. 14. 18. When we regard Christ as our Priest, ever living to make intercession for us, we may consider that it is our heavenly Father who avenges the cause of his Son, and strikes through even the mightiest princes, who set themselves to oppose the progress of the Gospel. At the same time we must remember that Christ is King also, "King of righteousness," and "King of peace;" Heb. 7. 2: and that in his character of King He is Judge "among the heathen;" He goes forth among them, "conquering, and to conquer:" Rev. 6. 2; He exterminates idolaters, by bringing them over to the truth of the Gospel; and triumphs, it is the triumph of righteousness and peace, over the heads of many countries.

We can easily see the force of this prophecy, thus applied, in the primitive times, when the progress of the Gospel was so rapid as to form a striking proof of its having had a divine origin. If during many a long interval, it may seem to have gained but little, and if there seem to have been but little room of late for the note of triumph in the cause of Christ, let us be aware that there is another sense in which He will "judge among the heathen," and "fill the places with the dead bodies." There are terrible things coming on the earth; on them who might have been believers in the Lord and would not, and on those who might have won them to the faith, and did not. As the weary traveller lifts up his head refreshed on drinking "of the brook in the way," so will the cause of Christ make renewed progress. And his glory will be signally made manifest in the dreadful punishment of those, whom even the apprehension of his coming judgment cannot prevail upon to do his will.

## THE COVENANT OF GRACE, OR THE COVENANT OF MERCY.

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## CHAPTER III.

## Of God's righteousness in his covenant.

There are two ways of the importance of praising God with the  
heart, and not with the lips only. The psalmist here uses an  
expression still more forcible. "I will praise the Lord with my  
whole heart." Let us endeavour then to have the whole attention  
of the soul engaged when we are employed in praising God. And  
especially let us watch against inactivity when we worship God in  
the congregation. For then there is more risk of our being tempted  
to approach him with service, and being content to join aloud  
with those around us, without the exercise of devotion in the heart.  
And in praising God let us turn our thoughts towards his works,  
great and marvellous as they are. It is to excite our deepest interest  
in the working of them out, and our devout admiration at the sight  
of them. As in the works of his creation and in the dealings  
of his providence, his glory is manifested, and his righteousness  
shown forth. His word and his work both prove, and prove the  
more conclusively the more we study them, that God is at once  
great and good, holy and gracious, righteous and compassionate.

But here, as in many other passages, the covenant of God is  
especially insisted on, as well as his faithfulness in fulfilling his  
covenant, in proof of his great power and goodness. Now this  
is apt to be a stumbling block to our erring reason and vain  
imagination. It seems to us at first no proof of greatness but  
rather the contrary, to enter into covenant, to be bound by a  
pledge, promise, or agreement. We are disposed to think none  
so great as those who are above all law and are bound by nothing.



And we are often tempted to wish, that we were less closely bound by laws both human and divine ourselves; as if we should then enjoy more perfect liberty, and should become more truly great. Perhaps it is one object of God's representing Himself in his word as pledged to us by covenant, to disabuse our minds of this false notion. He would have us know that to be bound to do that which is right is no detriment to liberty, but a great help towards being really free, nay, itself a part of real freedom. He would teach us hereby, that if we would be truly great, we must not seek to become so by setting ourselves above all law, but by fulfilling every obligation by which we are bound to be good, and by purposely pledging ourselves to goodness by every obligation in our power. He sets before us Himself in this aspect, as one bound by covenant, as one who has of his own sovereign will, and by his own divine command, ordained a perpetual covenant, and been Himself ever mindful of it. And hence He leads us to conclude that there can be nothing inconsistent with the perfect liberty, and transcendent greatness, of the Lord God almighty, in being bound to do that which is holy and just, true and good.

But again we may be tempted to object, that it does not seem consistent with God's goodness to confine his covenant to a portion of mankind, and in any sense to shut out the rest. But it is to be observed that we are distinctly told, "that God is no respecter of persons." Acts 10. 34. And we are assured in this psalm, that He "is gracious and full of compassion;" and again, that "He hath given meat unto them that fear him." So that doubtless though He respects not persons, He pays due regard to character. And yet on the other hand we are told, that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. See Rom. 9. 15. And the Israelites, his chosen people, are assured, that they were not chosen for their righteousness nor for the uprightness of their hearts. See Deut. 9. 5. So that we must confess that there is much in this subject which is beyond our understanding. Why some people are admitted into covenant rather than others, some chosen to gospel privileges whilst others never hear the name of Christ, and that owing to the fault of their more privileged brethren, this is a matter of which God has not vouchsafed to give us an account. But shall we therefore dare to doubt that his righteousness is in all things perfect? Shall we forget, that, as we are here reminded, "holy and reverend is his name?" No; let us be assured that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Nothing can be more foolish in man, however wise he may be tempted to think it, than to scan presumptuously, or to censure the ways of God. And one lesson which we may learn from his entering into covenant with some, and not with others, is this, that the thing formed has no right to ask of Him who made it, Why dost Thou deal thus with me?

*The psalmist praiseth God for the happiness of the good.*

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD: that delighteth greatly in his commandments.
- 2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.
- 3 Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.
- 4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
- 5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.
- 6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
- 7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.
- 8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.
- 9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.
- 10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

## LECTURE 963.

*The blessedness of God's faithful servants.*

The blessedness of God's faithful servants is a fruitful topic for praising his holy name. And the description here given of a faithful servant of God is this, that he "feareth the Lord," and also "delighteth greatly in his commandments." This then is not a slavish fear. It is not a serving God grudgingly or of necessity. It is a fear that has the same effect as love. For this, St. John says, "is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5. 3. Yet how few derive pleasure from the thought that they are fulfilling the commandments of the Lord! How few amongst us can be truly described as delighting greatly in God's commandments! Let us endeavour to obey God in this happy manner, and to derive our happiness from obeying Him. Let us so fear Him as at the same time to love Him heartily; so love Him, as at the same time to hold Him in awe and reverence.

And now let us observe how great is the blessedness of him who thus serves the Lord. "His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed." And so we are assured in the New Testament that the children of believers are holy. See 1 Cor. 7. 14. They have for their birth-right an inheritance of Christian privileges. They become the mighty of the earth, being those in whose weakness the strength of God is perfected. They have also riches in their dwellings, inasmuch as they are content with such things as they have; not to mention that their honesty, industry and sobriety usually ensure their temporal prosperity. At all events they have treasure

laid up in their home in heaven. Their "righteousness endureth for ever." That righteousness which they have by faith in Christ will redound to their wealth throughout all eternity. They may indeed for a time have trouble upon earth. But "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." They have the light of hope, the light of grace; they dwell in the light of God's countenance, both now, and hereafter for ever.

Do these great blessings make us long to know which they be that are so greatly blest? Are we desirous to be well assured that we have ground to be reckoned amongst them? Behold, some further marks and tokens of the man who is thus blest are here set down. He "is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." Kindness of heart, and kindness of manner, are united in his character with strict integrity and inflexible justice. Again "a good man sheweth favour and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion." He is ready to do acts of kindness, to give to them that ask of him, and to lend to them that would borrow of him. But in doing so he exercises a sound judgment; taking care lest he spend upon the idle and wasteful that which is intended for the relief of the afflicted. "Surely he will not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." No weapon formed against him shall permanently prosper. His memory shall be long cherished with affection, by those whom he leaves behind on earth; his faith and love, and good works, shall be had in everlasting remembrance in heaven. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." How different from the case of the worldly minded, whose trust is in riches, and who are constantly alarmed lest any thing should happen to make them poor; whose dependence is on the goodwill of man, and who live in fear of incurring the displeasure of their easily provoked fellow creatures! Enemies he has few, if any. It is his desire to have none at all. Even this desire shall be fulfilled at last. And if for the present he cannot help having some that are at enmity with him, he is not troubled with a fear of their hurting him, or with any doubt of his being enabled to defeat their machinations. His bounty to the poor, his perseverance in well doing, and the honour and esteem which hence accrue to him, redound to the mortification of the wicked. And whilst it is their lot to have their desire perish, their wishes thwarted, and all the evil which they delight in overruled for good, it is the good man's happiness to will always that which God wills, and that which is therefore sure to be eventually fulfilled.



*The psalmist would have God praised for his condescension.*

<p>He is the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. V. As a lion unto the Lions Praise ye the LORD.</p>	<p>our God, who dwelleth on high, I will humbleth himself to beyond the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren wo- man to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.</p>
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#### LECTURE 944.

*Praising the true God in his right name.*

IN THE psalm preceding, the blessedness of the righteous is  
described, and is a ground for praising God. Here they that are  
his chosen, the "servants of the Lord," are exhorted to praise  
his name. "I praise thee, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name  
of the LORD." And the psalmist as joining with those whom he  
addresses, or willing to set them an example by beginning, declares  
it his own reason, "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this  
time forth, and for evermore." He next declares, that this note  
of praise should be heard in heaven from all quarters of the  
world, "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the  
same the LORD's name is to be praised." And the reasons which  
he gives are such as apply directly in all parts of the world.  
First, "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above  
the heavens." All nations then are alike bound to worship Him,  
and the heavens too, and all the powers therein. Next the Lord  
is above comparison with all other beings, whether with men, with  
angels, or with them that have been worshipped falsely as gods:  
"Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high?"

Now we have here set before us some particular points in  
which almighty God is supremely exalted. He "humbleth him-  
self to below the things that are in heaven and in earth." And  
his love runs through the "is high above all nations, and his glory  
above the heavens." And what an elevated notion does it give  
us of God's greatness when we are told that it is an humbling of  
Himself to below the things that are in heaven and in the earth?  
Yes, to be every thing and to know every thing, to number the  
stars of our heavens, to count the sparrows that fall on the ground,  
to weigh the earth in his balance, and to measure the heavens  
with his span, and even to know, such is his marvellous omni-

science, all the thoughts and affections of all his creatures, in heaven and in earth; this in God is a humbling of Himself. Oh how high then must He be, how wise, how great! Oh how gracious is it in One that is so great to humble Himself at all!

As a proof of his condescending to notice things on earth, the psalmist mentions two instances of things manifestly providential; such as could not be brought about, as far as we can see into the nature of things, unless it were true that there is One above, who not only knows every thing, but also orders all things. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." And again, "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." And these are not only instances to prove that God vouchsafes to care for his unworthy creatures, they are also types of God's dealings with his church. They represent to us the fallen race of man, raised up from the degradation of sin, to be crowned with glory and honour and immortality. And again, they represent to us the fruitfulness of the church, of which it is written in Scripture, "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." Gal. 4. 27.

These things then are all strong reasons for praising the name of the Lord. And observe it no less than thrice in this psalm that "the name of the Lord" is mentioned as an object of praise. It cannot then be, as some suppose, a matter of indifference, by what name we worship God. The true name belongs to the true God, and truly expresses what He is, a self existing eternal Being. This is the meaning of the Hebrew word Jehovah, or "the Lord." And the reason why God would have his name to be praised is this, that He would have Himself and none other to be worshipped. Let us then desire earnestly to have all men worship the true God, and praise Him in his own most holy name. Let us endeavour to instruct the untutored heathen in the knowledge of the truth; and to win also the self satisfied philosopher of the world, from worshipping a God of his own invention, to a lowly and reverent adoration of the Lord God revealed in the Bible. He and He alone is God at all. He will not have his honour given to another. He will not have other names set up in honour to be worshipped, as if there were other Gods but one. And as it has been justly said in other matters that names are things, considering how much they affect realities, so we may be sure that to reverence God's holy name is our way to honour God Himself.

*The psalmist biddeth the earth tremble at God's presence.*

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| 1 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; | that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, <i>that thou wast driven back?</i>                      |
| 2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.                                    | 6 Ye mountains, <i>that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?</i>       |
| 3 The sea saw <i>it</i> , and fled: Jordan was driven back.                            | 7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; |
| 4 The mountains skipped like rams, <i>and the little hills like lambs.</i>             | 8 Which turned the rock <i>into</i> a standing water, the flint into                     |
| 5 What <i>ailed</i> thee, O thou sea,  | a fountain of waters.  |

### LECTURE 965.

*That it is an awful thing for God to manifest Himself.*

The deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt is very frequently referred to in Scripture, as a signal instance of the loving kindness of the Lord. Some of the circumstances connected with that event are here celebrated with thankfulness by the psalmist, as redounding to the glory of God. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion." The sanctuary of God, the dominion of God, these were set up and openly established in the tribe of Judah, in the people of Israel. There had been a separation commenced long before. Ever since the call of Abraham it had been evident that God designed to take unto Himself a peculiar people, by whom He should be worshipped, and amongst whom He should bear sway; when the rest of mankind, having been left to their own ways, would have turned aside from serving Him who made them. But whilst the posterity of Abraham were in bondage in Egypt, there seemed little prospect of any such consummation. The unbelieving nations round about had probably begun to ask scornfully of this foreordained separation, Where is the promise of his coming? And the Israelites themselves must have greatly needed some striking encouragement on the part of the Most High, to assure their hopes, and to elevate their thoughts from the condition of oppressed bondservants to that of God's chosen people.

How seasonable then were the miracles here alluded to, the signs and wonders here most forcibly described! The waves of the Red Sea divided, the stream of Jordan stayed, mount Sinai and the hills around made to shake as though trembling with fear; how seasonably were these miracles adapted to give encouragement to the Israelites, and to manifest the power of almighty God to the nations which doubted of his being! How appropriately does the psalmist bid the whole earth tremble at the presence of that God, who could thus make its solid moun-



tains shake, and at the same time turn its hardest rocks into fountains of waters! How profitably may we understand his exhortation, as addressed not to the earth itself, but to all them who dwell in every part thereof, who were in truth all concerned in the miracles wrought by God in behalf of his chosen people, and who might all have heard a true report of these marvellous works, had men but been as diligent in celebrating the praise of God, as in noising abroad the signal actions of each other!

There was indeed much of awful import to all the people of the earth, in the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians. And we shall not easily estimate this matter aright, unless we call to mind the very eminent place which Egypt then occupied in the scale of nations. Here was a people second to none, and probably at this time superior to any, in wisdom, wealth, and strength, except it may be the rising kingdom of Assyria; here was a people which in time of famine had supplied corn to all the countries round about them; here was a people from whom in after times the Greeks and Romans borrowed nearly all that made them the most celebrated nations of antiquity; and this people so great, so skilful, this people and their king in the plenitude of his power, are baffled and defeated by their own bondservants, the descendants within a few generations of a single family, that had been allowed to settle in their country. This alone would be marvellous in the eyes of all beholders. But when we add the miracles by means of which this deliverance was accomplished, we may well conceive that all who heard of it must have felt impressed with the conviction, The finger of God is here.

And why would it be an awful thing to them to feel certain that God was actually interposing? Because by this time they had for their own part begun to exchange the glory of God for the worship of images. And therefore instead of being glad to see his glory manifested they would view its manifestation with alarm. And so it is that the wicked view the tidings of God's having redeemed sinful men; so it is that they regard any plain instance brought before them of a sinner saved by grace. The finger of God is here also. And it fills them with terror to behold it. It is the God whom they have set at nought. It is the mercy which they have despised. It is the redemption which they have neglected. And how can they help reflecting, on seeing others saved from their sins, how can they help reflecting in themselves with shame and terror, how much they have lost at this present time, how much they have put in jeopardy for evermore?

*The psalmist exhorteth to trust in God.*

- 1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.
- 2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God?
- 3 But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
- 4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:
- 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:
- 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.
- 8 They that make them *are* like unto them: *so* *is* every one that trusteth in them.
- 9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.
- 10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.
- 11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.
- 12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless *us*; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.
- 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, *both* small and great.
- 14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.
- 15 Ye *are* blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.
- 16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.
- 17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.
- 18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

## LECTURE 966.

*The Necessity of fearing God.*

It would seem presumptuous in such as we are to deem that the glory of God is in any wise dependent on our behaviour or condition: if it were not that we are often taught so to view the matter in God's word. And as the Israelites in their trouble here pray to God to help them, not for their own glory's sake, but for his, so may we, as professing to be followers of Christ, beg God to give us grace to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, lest they who are professors of ungodliness should say of us, "Where is now their God?" In our age and country, enlightened as we deem them, most men agree to think it the height of folly to bow down before images and to worship them. But how little less foolish is it, to make to themselves idols, as many do, of their riches, or their reputation, of their success in life, or that of their children, of their sensual pleasures, or of their intellectual tastes. When we consider how soon all these things pass away, we shall feel that it is in reality as unwise to put our

trust in them, as in idols which have eyes but see not, ears but hear not. But in these things the worldly minded put their trust. These are their gods, and seem to them to be more present to help, more safe to be relied upon, than our God is to us. "Where is now their God?" say they, as if because He is invisible, He is no where to be met with. But we know that He is in heaven; we know that there He reigns, the Lord of all, in heaven and in earth. We know whom we have believed; and we are persuaded that He will prove infinitely more able, and more willing, to defend, support, and comfort us, than all the gods of this world's idolatry.

It is after comparing God who dwells in heaven, with idols the workmanship of men, that the psalmist calls first on the house of Israel, next on the house of Aaron, and then on all that fear the Lord, to trust in the Lord; assuring them each severally that He is the help and shield of them that trust in Him. And as a ground of confidence in future help, he refers to past blessings, saying, "The Lord hath been mindful of us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great." Here is an assurance of blessedness for the people in general, and an assurance of blessedness to the family in which the priesthood was established. Here is an assurance of blessedness to all of every condition, of every family, provided only they would fear the Lord. Let us then fear Him: and behold we have warrant for trusting as well as fearing Him. Let our fear be no spirit of bondage, but a reverential sense of his divine majesty, and such a lively apprehension of his perfect holiness as renders us afraid to sin. Let our fear be such as this. And then our trust may be an entire reliance on his mercy and truth, that He will be ever present to help us, ever mighty to save us, that He will now give us grace unto holiness, and hereafter give us happiness in heaven.

The psalmist seems purposely to advert both to blessedness in this life, and to blessedness in the life which is to come. He assures them that fear the Lord, that the Lord will increase both them and their children. He reminds them that the Lord, by whom they are blessed, is the Maker both of heaven and of earth. As to the earth, He has given that to the children of men; but He still overrules all that happens here, and orders all for good. As to the heaven, it is in another life that He will bless us there. And though it may seem as if the dead could neither be blessed nor bless, yet the psalmist says, "we will bless the Lord from this time forth for evermore." Yes, "from this time forth" will we praise his name, mortal though we be, "from this time forth for evermore;" because this mortal will put on immortality; and because the blessedness for which we began to praise God, whilst here in the flesh, is but the beginning of a blessedness for which we shall have cause so to bless his name to all eternity.



*The psalmist professeth thankfulness for deliverance.*

- 1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.
- 2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.
- 3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.
- 4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
- 5 Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful.
- 6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.
- 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
- 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.
- 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
- 10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:
- 11 I said in my haste, All men *are* liars.
- 12 What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?
- 13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.
- 14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.
- 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.
- 16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.
- 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.
- 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.
- 19 In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

## LECTURE 967.

*Of loving God in return for his goodness.*

It is doubtless well to love the Lord our God by reason of his own perfect excellency, independently of the benefits which He bestows upon his creatures. But it is well also to say with the apostle John, "we love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4. 19. It is well to say with the psalmist, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." The psalm appears to refer to some great peril experienced, and to some signal deliverance vouchsafed by God in answer to prayer. And many in the even tenour of their lives may think that they have no ground for using such language as this, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." But let them know, that however peaceful and prosperous their lot may seem, these things are nigh at hand. No child of Adam is for a moment safe from death, and

from the worst that can come after death; except so far as God may be prevailed upon to deliver and save the soul.

Let us therefore with the psalmist pray earnestly for help from heaven. Let us thankfully testify that God is gracious in helping those who call upon Him faithfully. Let us by faith in his precious promises look upon ourselves as reconciled, justified, delivered, saved. Let us hear Him speaking peace unto our souls. Let us resolve that we will stedfastly live unto Him who has dealt so bountifully with us. And whatsoever rash words we may have spoken, whatsoever hard thoughts we may have conceived, when being without the peace of God to keep our hearts and minds, we were apt to murmur against Him and against each other, let us now study to express our devout thankfulness unto the Lord, by paying Him our vows in the presence of all his people, and thereby at once aiming to glorify Him and to edify our brethren.

We need not think that our devout affection is liable to the charge of being interested, because we plainly say that we love the Lord for having dealt bountifully with us. Neither is it beneath his greatness, or unworthy of his goodness, that we should offer Him our praises and thanksgivings, on account of his tender regard for our souls, and as it were in return for his free salvation. The psalmist does not hesitate to say in the same breath, "thou hast loosed my bonds," and "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." It is pride that would make us seek to be independent of help, and altogether disinterested in affection. But true greatness is not compatible with pride. And God therefore vouchsafes to represent Himself in Scripture, as winning the affection of his creatures, by heaping his benefits upon them. May the countless blessings which we receive at his hand move our hearts to thankfulness, and our tongues to praise! And if He deigns in mercy to receive as a thank offering such poor service as we can render Him at the best, may we be glad to offer the best we can, and glad to think that we really may make Him some return for all his goodness, by loving Him with all our hearts, and serving Him throughout all our lives!



*The psalmist exhorteth all nations to praise God.*

1 O praise the LORD, all ye na- great towards us : and the truth  
tions : praise him, all ye people. of the LORD endureth for ever.  
2 For his merciful kindness is Praise ye the LORD.

### LECTURE 968.

*Against being proud and jealous of our Christian privileges.*

The Jewish dispensation is very commonly regarded as an exclusive one. And it certainly was so regarded to a great extent by the Jews themselves. But in so regarding it they appear to have misunderstood the design of the Almighty in separating them from amongst the nations; and they must have overlooked many passages in their own Scriptures, and this Psalm amongst the rest, which plainly prove, that God would gladly have had all mankind know Him and praise his name. Justly therefore we may consider, that one object of the separation of the Jews, and of the committing to them the knowledge of the true God, and of giving them a Law which bound them very closely to have the fear of Him continually before their eyes, was this, that they might be the means of making his name and his truth known unto the rest of mankind; that they might both preserve the truth and diffuse it, that they might preserve it, not by locking it up, or burying it, as the slothful servant did with the talent committed to his charge, but by putting it out to interest, multiplying the knowledge and the love of it, and delighting to have it known and loved as far as possible by all mankind.

It is indeed a strange instance of the perversity of man, that with this psalm in their hands, and doubtless often in their mouths, this people should have become almost uniformly jealous of all attempts to impart the knowledge of the truth to others. More especially was this the case at the time when the Gospel was preached, by God's commandment, in all the world. That they were so is proved in many cases by the history of the Acts of the Apostles. It is proved also by many passages in S. Paul's Epistles. And that such jealousy is at variance with the purport of this psalm, is proved by S. Paul's quoting these words to the Christians at Rome, most of whom were converted Jews, in order to satisfy them, that it was the will of God that the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy as freely as the Jews. See Rom. 15. 11. But alas this jealousy is not confined to the Jewish race. It is to be met with not unfrequently amongst those who have succeeded to the Jewish privileges, and who are now called, as the Israelites were of old, the children of the living God. It is to be met with amongst Christians. Christians are proud of their privileges. Yes, awful as is the thought, they are proud of them in such a sense, and to such a degree, as that they are jealous of *their being* imparted to others. They are proud of being more



holy, as they suppose, than their fellow Christians. Or they are glad to think, that inasmuch as they themselves are Christians, they are superior to their heathen fellow creatures. This is indeed far from being an universal feeling amongst us. But there is reason to fear that it does sometimes occur. And it is therefore desirable to watch over ourselves, and to examine our own hearts, lest a feeling so opposite to the spirit of the Gospel should gain any footing within us.

Let us examine then, Could we be happy to believe that our brethren around us would in every instance bear comparison with ourselves for piety and charity, for just views of Scripture truth, and for faithful fulfilment of holy practices? Could we be content that every nation of the earth should be as much enlightened with the knowledge of the truth as we conceive our own nation to be? Could we be glad if a church as pure and apostolical as ours were established in every kingdom of the world? Do we feel no pride of superiority in the thought, that whilst we know and worship the true God, as revealed in the Gospel, the greater part of our fellow-creatures are up to this very hour in ignorance of his name and of his nature, bowing down to stocks and stones? Oh let us be aware that if we once suffer ourselves to be proud of what we have, we shall soon fall into the snare of grudging others any share of it. Oh let us take warning from the exclusive temper of the Jews, and know that there is no advantage of which it is more likely that man will grow proud, or the pride of which is more likely to make men jealous and exclusive, than the inestimable privilege of being, as we are, the chosen people of God. The best remedy against this most unchristian temper is for us to be diligent in propagating abroad the knowledge of the Gospel of our Saviour, out of a hearty desire to promote his glory, and to forward the salvation of all men. Let us look upon salvation, not selfishly, as if it were merely our own gain, but devoutly and thankfully towards our Saviour, as if nothing could more delight our hearts than to make Him known and loved by all men. Let us give as largely as we can towards this object. Let us think much of it, and pray much for its accomplishment. And the greater we feel his merciful kindness has been towards ourselves, so much the more heartily, earnestly, and zealously, let us say to all mankind, "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people."

*The psalmist praiseth God for saving him out of trouble.*

1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: because his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and *set me* in a large place.

6 The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.

8 *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

9 *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.

11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.

14 The LORD *is* my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

15 The voice of rejoicing and

salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD:

20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

22 The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

23 This is the LORD's doing; *it is* marvellous in our eyes.

24 This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

26 Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

27 God *is* the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.

28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee: *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee.

29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.



## LECTURE 969.

*God's mercy shewn in succouring the helpless.*

There is one verse of this psalm which is frequently referred to in the New Testament as prophetic of our Saviour Christ, "the stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner." And a thought something to this effect seems to pervade the whole psalm, namely, that God's mercifulness is shewn by his succouring those who seem most helpless, by his saving those who seem most lost, by his giving light and life to those who seem most nigh to darkness and to death. His ways are not as our ways. His thoughts are far above out of our sight. Very different would have been our notions as to a Saviour for all mankind, very different from the method which God thought most meet, to vindicate his justice, and to glorify his grace. Very different from his are our judgments apt to be, as to who fares well and who ill; who is really happy, really great, and who really miserable and vile. It is not the countenance of princes that ought to give us confidence, but the having the Lord on our side. It is not the being compassed about by multitudes that need give us alarm, if the name of the Lord be with us. Man may threaten, and death assail, and Satan thrust sore at us for death eternal; but God can give us safety, life, righteousness, and heaven. We may be rejected of God in the apprehension of men, and yet may be built up by Him as living stones in his everlasting temple. Let us then abide by the judgment of God, and give so much the less heed to the judgment of man. Let us praise God for judging righteous judgment, and strive to be commended by Him, who alone can and will in all things judge righteously. Let us rejoice that we have lived to see the day, when God has made manifest in our Saviour the vanity of this world's greatness, and has taught us that the way to be exalted by Him is to abase ourselves. And let us pray Him to send us now that best of all prosperity, to be sanctified with the riches of his grace, and fitted for partaking of his glory.

O God, whose "mercy endureth for ever," we give Thee thanks for having visited us in our fallen state with thy most glad salvation. Grant, we beseech Thee, that we whom Thou hast saved by thy Son, may be so largely sanctified by thy Holy Spirit, that we may be meet to partake of thy everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

ALEPH.

1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.

3 They also do no iniquity : they walk in his ways.

4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes !

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

8 I will keep thy statutes : O forsake me not utterly.

BETH.

9 Wherewithal shall a young

man cleanse his way ? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee : O let me not wander from thy commandments.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

12 Blessed *art* thou, O LORD : teach me thy statutes.

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, *as much as* in all riches.

15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes : I will not forget thy word.

### LECTURE 970.

*The blessedness of doing all things as God tells us.*

There is a peculiarity in the structure of this psalm in the original, each verse or stanza of the first portion beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each in the second portion with the second letter, and so on to the end. This might be designed to assist the memory in treasuring up this instructive description of the uses of God's most holy word, and of the blessedness of those who keep his commandments. And since it shews much skill and labour in the use of language, this method might be adopted here, as well as in some others of the psalms, in order to shew that every faculty, every excellency, ought to be pressed into the service of the sanctuary, and applied to the glorifying of Him, who is the Author and Giver of all good things.

Various are the expressions here made use of, to set before us, as far as language can, the inestimable value of the Scriptures, and the inexpressible blessedness of those "who walk in the law of the Lord." And many are the words and phrases used to describe that of which the Scriptures consist ; each one of which, if we could trace out its meaning fully, either in the Hebrew or in our own tongue, would supply us with many an useful lesson,

with many a profitable reflexion. Thus "the law of the Lord," spoken of in the first verse, suggests the notion of God's directing all things by a settled order. To live according to the law or order which He has directed must therefore be the way to live happily. To be undefiled in this way must be our highest happiness. But if we would attain unto this happiness, we must make no reserve in our obedience; we must seek God with our whole heart. It is his will in our behalf that we should obey all his law without exception. And though it be true that we may be often led astray by the frailty of our nature, and yet be forgiven, and afterwards become obedient, yet we must never have it our settled purpose to transgress in any one point, we must never resign ourselves to the supposed necessity of transgressing. We must pray for grace to keep the whole law. We ought to feel deeply ashamed upon transgressing any part of it. We must study to understand the whole of it aright, if we would be prepared to praise God acceptably. And we must pray God not to withhold his help from us in the fulfilment of any part of it, lest at length He forsake us utterly.

If God, the Maker of all things, the Judge of all men, has laid down a settled order for the direction of our lives, this must supply the best means of meeting the many difficulties that haunt us in this present world. The young man may here find a remedy against the sins which most easily beset him in his youth. The unstable may here learn how to seek God with their whole heart, and to wander from his ways no more. This law we must cherish in our inmost hearts if we would not sin against God. But it is God that must Himself teach us how to do so. And blessed be his name He is willing to instruct us. What we already know we must be apt to declare to others. We must rejoice in it, as in a possession of more value than this world's wealth. We must ponder on it frequently, pay regard to it devoutly, take pleasure both in knowing and in doing it, and watch that we never fail to bear it in remembrance. Lord, let us then know what it is thy will that we should do. Enable us to understand that written law of thine, by which Thou hast directed that we should live, and by which Thou hast determined that Thou wilt judge. And as it is thine own glory to do all things by a law of thine own ordaining, a law of perfect righteousness, so let it be, we pray Thee, our delight, as we doubt not it must always be our gain, to do every thing we have to do on earth according to the law which Thou hast given us from heaven.





with the psalmist, that God would deal bountifully with us, in regard to both these blessings. And rejecting Satan's offer of opening our eyes by false or forbidden knowledge, see Gen. 3. 5, let us apply to God in prayer, for power to discern the wondrous things of his revealing. We may plead the short time that we have on earth as a ground for praying to be enlightened in the things of heaven. And if we felt as we ought how infinitely precious they are, we should be able to say truly with the psalmist, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Behold, to go astray from that which is revealed, this comes of pride, this exposes us to the rebuke and to the curse of the Lord. But to believe that which He has testified, this is our way to avoid shame and dishonour, this will render us superior to the oppression of the mighty; this will make us happy in our own minds, whatsoever reproaches are brought against us, this will give us wisdom in the greatest difficulties, and cheerfulness in the most deep distress.

Various as are the terms used throughout this psalm, to signify the precious things revealed by God in holy Scripture, there is a still greater variety in the words, employed to express how we ought to feel affected towards that which God hereby teaches us, how we ought to pray to Him to teach us, and how He is graciously pleased to make his divine word effectual, to our improvement of heart and life. Thus in the latter part of the passage before us, God is spoken of as quickening us according to his word, or giving us fresh life thereby, when we are dead in spiritual things. Again, He it is who teaches us his statutes, makes us to understand the way of his precepts, strengthens us in our weakness and heaviness of soul according to his word, grants us his law graciously, and enlarges our hearts to receive it, that is to say, imparts to us this precious gift, and the ability to use it for our profit.

These things God is wont to do for us, these things we ought to beseech Him to do for us, in regard to his revealed will. And we for our parts here learn that it is our duty to declare his ways. To witness a good confession before others of that which we learn from Him, to talk of his wondrous works, to choose the way of his truth, as infinitely preferable to the way of lying, to the false ways of the deceitful world, to the snares of the great deceiver of mankind, and to the deceitful lusts of the flesh. We are to lay God's judgments before us as the rule by which to live in order to please Him. We are to cleave unto his testimonies; and then we may have the more confidence in praying that He will not put us to shame. We are to run the way of his commandments, not merely to keep in it, but to make progress, yea, to make swift progress; He giving us courage, strength, and speed, and we quick to follow where He leads, glad to get forward in a path which ends in heaven and in Him.

*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

HI

VAU.

1. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.*

2. *Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law: yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

3. *Make me to go in the path of thy commandments: for desired have I delight.*

4. *Incline my heart unto thy commandments, and not to covetousness.*

5. *Thy law mine eyes from following vanity: and quicken thou me in thy way.*

6. *Search thy word unto thy servant: who is devoted to thy law.*

7. *Thy law my reproach when I stand before the judgment-seat of God.*

8. *Because I have hoped after thy promises: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *even* thy salvation, according to thy word.

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

## LECTURE 972.

*The blessedness of walking always in the way of the Lord.*

The holy Scriptures mark out to us a way or path, which if we rightly follow, it will lead us unto everlasting life. The psalmist therefore here prays, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;" and again, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;" and again, "quicken thou me in thy way." This term, thus applied to the word of God, may remind us, how many other ways there are of walking, and how full of misery they are. It may suggest to us, how many are the temptations that are apt to draw us aside from the path of holiness and happiness. It may remind us, that it is our duty to make progress in the right way, to be always going onwards, always advancing in the knowledge, love, and practice, of that which God has revealed. It is not a way that we can find out for ourselves; therefore let us pray God to teach it us. It is a way from which we may at any time be tempted to turn aside; therefore let us resolve firmly that with Him to guide us we will keep it unto the end. Otherwise *what profit shall we have in knowing it? How shall we not fare*

the worse for having once been in it, if we afterwards turn aside, and altogether leave it?

It is then absolutely necessary to persevere in well doing. It is no less so to serve God, and keep his law, with our "whole heart." To love Him and obey Him by halves, is like walking in his way and then turning out of it; it seems to prove, to our greater condemnation, that we know the good, and deliberately choose the evil. But how various, how urgent are the temptations which are continually inviting us to leave the path of God's commandments! Covetousness, which is here mentioned, is one fruitful source of trial. The many real wants to which we are now liable, and the many more which we make to ourselves by habits of self indulgence, and by vain emulation of each other, these things are apt to keep both rich and poor intent on the pursuit of this world's wealth. The "beholding vanity," the mere sight of those objects which minister to the pride of life, is apt to distract our attention from the path which is set before us. The fear of reproach also has its weight with many. And so hard is it to bear the ill will and scorn of our fellow creatures, that we may well pray to God to turn away from us the reproach which we have feared.

But chiefly let us study to find our pleasure in God's way, to delight in his commandments, to be devoted to his service in the affection of our hearts. Let us long for his precepts, trust in his word, hope in his judgments, seek his precepts, love his commandments, and lift up our hands unto them, as unto that which we really love and long for, which we rejoice to embrace and to hold fast. This is the best method of persevering unto the end in the right way, not to go along it grudgingly, not to serve God as if we thought Him a hard master, not to keep his commandments under the notion all the while that they are grievous, and with the wish all the while that we might safely transgress them. No wonder that they who thus walk are easily prevailed upon to try some of the thousand other paths, that turn aside to the right and to left, are easily persuaded to believe the words of the deceiver, "Ye shall not surely die." Gen. 3. 4. Not thus let us attempt to serve God, not in the spirit of bondage, not with the reluctance of slavish fear; but with a deep conviction of his goodness and of his love, lying at the foundation of all our faith and all our service, and with a full persuasion that all his commandments are dictated by loving kindness to ourselves. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. They are so. It is our mistake if we think otherwise. But if we esteem them as they really are, then we have a sufficient answer to all reproaches, then we find his service perfect freedom, then we are not ashamed of his Gospel even before the most mighty of them that oppose it, and then, as long as we live, we are sure to walk stedfastly, according to his will.



*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

ZAIN.

49 Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: *yet* have I not declined from thy law.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

CHETH.

57 *Thou art* my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

58 I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

63 I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

## LECTURE 973.

*The blessedness of being guided by God's judgments.*

Amongst the various expressions used in this psalm, for the contents of holy Scripture, let us now particularly attend to the word "judgment;" which term suggests to us the notion, that God will judge us according to the laws herein set forth, according to the word herein spoken, according to the way herein pointed out. This is a thought full of terror to the wicked, as it is also full of comfort to the godly. Nay, and they also, who are warranted in hence deriving consolation for themselves, must be deeply distressed at reflecting on the end awaiting those who are disobedient to the word. "Horror hath taken hold upon me," the psalmist says, "because of the wicked that forsake thy law." A striking proof of faith and love! A proof which would be striking, and effectual, through God's blessing, on others, as well as encouraging to ourselves, if we were to feel more deeply horror such as this, so deeply that we could not help shewing it, on any instance of gross wickedness coming under our view! Yet how commonly, on the contrary, do they who are themselves sober make merry over the mad conduct of the drunken! How often do we see those who are true in speech, and honest in their

dealings, smile at the recital of some successful act of dexterity in overreaching ! How popular amongst us are writings, which make light of many grievous sins against God, and are esteemed of a moral tendency because they denounce those offences which are held to be injurious to society !

Let us, as believers in the word of God, bear in mind, that this is his rule of judgment. This is the rule by which we ought now to be guided in our estimate of right and wrong. For this is the rule whereby God will Himself try all our words and works hereafter. Let us pray that we may have grace to mould our judgment of good and evil simply by the pattern here set before us. Let us earnestly strive to act upon the convictions thus impressed upon our minds. And whatever horror may hence arise in our hearts in contemplating the condition of the wicked, let us not shrink from expressing it faithfully ; only watching that at the same time we express it affectionately. Not as trusting in ourselves that we are righteous, and condemning others, but as sincerely believing the word of God, and as knowing, when we obviously cannot help knowing it, that they are doing those things which God has plainly forbidden, and as earnestly desiring to help in saving them from the terrible end which must else await them, thus let it be the language of our lips, and the silent admonition of our looks, to those who forsake God's law, "Flee from the wrath to come." Matt. 3. 7.

And for ourselves, if we really find ourselves quickened by the word, keeping God's precepts, and stedfastly purposing to keep them all and always, if we make haste instead of delaying to keep his commandments, if we take pleasure in the companionship of those who keep them, and if whilst we have this testimony of conscience for the past, we still pray devoutly and humbly for grace whereby to stand for the future ; then what comfort is provided for us in the thought, that this rule whereby we are living is that whereby we shall be judged. God's judgments as recorded in his word now give us hope rather than fear. They console us under the derision of the proud, and under the wrongs of the oppressor. They are the matter of our thankful songs in the house of our pilgrimage. They are the subject of our joyful meditation in the hours of midnight darkness, yea, even when we are about to enter the darkness of the grave. Still we can say thankfully, "Thou art my portion, O Lord." Still we can feel, if the earth be "full of thy mercy," how much more the heavens ! And if it yield us so much of happiness, even to serve Thee so imperfectly as we do at the best in this life, how perfect will be the bliss of perfectly fulfilling thy holy will in the life which is to come !

*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

TETH.

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

68 Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease; *but* I delight in thy law.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

JOD.

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me un-

derstanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: *but* I will meditate in thy precepts.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

## LECTURE 974.

*The blessedness of obeying God's commandments.*

That God vouchsafes to speak to us graciously, and to appeal to the best affections of our hearts, this must never make us forget that He has the right to command us absolutely; for which no other proof need be assigned than that which is here suggested by the psalmist, "Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." "Commandments," yes, these well become a Creator in dealing with his creatures. And to obey, this is the bounden duty and service of the thing formed toward Him who made it. Let us look upon holy Scripture as containing the commandments of our Maker. Let us believe that they are his commandments. How, if we believe this, how could we hesitate to obey? Nay, if we add that this our omnipotent Creator has revealed Himself to us in the aspect of a Father, shall not this add to the force of his commands? And if we add further that God has made Himself known unto us as our Saviour, God manifest in the flesh,



Christ dying for us on the cross, shall we not so much the more implicitly obey the commands of Him who saved us?

Viewing God's revealed will in the light of a commandment, it is obvious that we can have no right to question the grounds on which He enjoins one thing and forbids another. We may admire and adore, but we are not at liberty to question or doubt; we must quietly and submissively obey. When we believe that any thing has been commanded by God, and understand what it means, our only remaining concern is to do it. It is pride that would tempt us to resist his will. It is self will that would suggest enquiries into this or that commandment of our Maker, as to how far He can justly require us to obey. A humble conviction of this truth, that He is our Creator, and much more of this, that He is our Redeemer, will satisfy us that all his commandments, whether we can account for them or not, must be good as He is good, and righteous as He is righteous.

And therefore it is good for us to be afflicted. For affliction tends to humble our hearts. Affliction reminds us that we are not our own, that we are in the hands of One mightier, infinitely mightier, than ourselves. And as our earthly parents find chastisement the means of enforcing the obedience of their children, so does our heavenly Father use the rod of affliction to chastise our high thoughts, and to render us obedient, both for our own greater good, and for his greater glory. Let then the afflicted, whilst they take comfort from the thought, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," Heb. 12. 6, also take occasion from affliction to examine their ways, and see whether they have not needed this wholesome admonition, to bring them to a proper sense of some commandment which they have neglected to obey. And let them be thankful for any trouble which it may please God to lay upon them, if thereby He graciously teaches them to know his commandments better, and to obey them more.

Very striking is the contrast here set before us between the proud who set at nought God's commandments, dealing perversely with those who keep them, and the faithful who keep them with their whole heart. The one wilful, the others submissive; the one oppressive, the others resigned; the one presumptuous, the others distrustful of themselves, and trusting in God's mercy for their hope and comfort. Surely there is no pride so abominable as for man to be proud with his Maker. No prosperity surely is to be desired, that is likely to make us feel above depending upon God. "Thousands of gold and silver" could not pay us what we lose, if we forget our allegiance to Him. And if we could have them in abundance, without trusting in them, or being tempted by them to forget God, we ought still to feel that the law of his mouth is better unto us than all that all this world's riches can bestow.

*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

CAPEL.

81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but* I hope in thy word.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

83 For I am become like a burnt in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.

84 How many are the days of thy servant: when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

85 The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.

86 All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully: help thou me.

87 They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not thy precepts.

88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness: so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

LAMED.

89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

94 I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment is exceeding broad.

### LECTURE 975.

*The blessedness of being taught of God in his precepts.*

The word "precepts" is one of the terms by which the contents of holy Scripture are often spoken of in this psalm. This term suggests the idea of God's teaching us; of his appointing us a lesson to learn, and taking pains to instruct us in it, as well as requiring that we should know it perfectly. Now a thirst for knowledge is one of the strongest propensities in our nature. And in many branches of learning, which are curious rather than useful, which yield us little return for our pains except the gratification of the thirst for knowledge, men are known to labour with the utmost possible diligence, and to attend with the utmost possible patience. In divine knowledge we have not only greater mysteries unravelled than in any other, not only objects more sublime and beautiful to observe and to reflect upon; but we have the most momentous interests at stake; we may learn the way of life eternal, we may be taught how the soul is to be saved.

Let us therefore resort with eagerness to our divine Preceptor. He will teach us patience in adversity. He will make it manifest unto us, that whatsoever we may suffer here for well doing,

whatsoever be the present cost of obeying his commandments, still they are all, like Himself, faithful, just, and good. He will explain to us the meaning of them. He will train us in the keeping of them. He will keep us stedfast in the doing of them. He will quicken us, or render us more alive, to the work of fulfilling them alway unto the end. He has chastisements for the idle, the wayward, the obstinate, the refractory. He has rewards, both present encouragements, and infinitely greater happiness in prospect, for the diligent, the obedient, the submissive; for them that make good progress, and hold fast to that which they have learnt. And above all He works by influencing the heart. He moves the affections by the grace of his Holy Spirit, inclining us to long to learn, to delight in learning, to thirst for divine knowledge, and to delight in doing that which we know to be his will.

We may interpret the latter portion of the words before us as though they were the thankful meditation of a devout soul, brought up in the school of divine knowledge, a proficient in the precepts of the Lord. Such an one is firmly convinced, that the word of God is true in the highest sense throughout; that though written on earth, it is also "settled in heaven." God's faithfulness too, he feels assured, endures unto all generations. As sure as the earth abides, so sure is his word, once spoken, unto all mankind, in all ages. All things, in the enlightened apprehension of such a well instructed scholar of the Lord, all things are regarded as fulfilling God's will, all men as doing God service, whether they will or no. But for his part it is his privilege to serve God willingly. And how great is his gain in thus serving God! How thankfully in his devout reflections does he say unto the Lord: Had I not taken pleasure in thy word and will I could never have sustained the miseries of this life. But now I can glory in tribulation. Now are thy precepts deeply printed on my memory, because by them Thou hast given me renewal of life. Thine I am, as I have now learnt from Thee. Now I plead with Thee to save that which is thine own, to save one who regards himself as thine, one who studies to do thy will. Now I trust that Thou wilt save me from all them that seek to compass my destruction. I trust in thy assurance, and am safe. And whilst I have found all things else, however excellent in appearance, to be vain in reality, I can safely trust in that which Thou hast testified, that it never can be overthrown, never can become of none effect.



*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

MEM.

97 O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

SEN.

105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

106 I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

109 My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

## LECTURE 976.

*The blessedness of believing God's testimonies.*

Happy the man, who can with the psalmist truly say to God, "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day!" Happy he, who without vain glory is warranted by the fact in stating thankfully to God, thy commandments "are ever with me;" and again, "thy testimonies are my meditations;" and again, "I keep thy precepts;" and again, "I have refrained from every evil way, that I might keep thy word;" and again, "I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me!" These that obey are they who find the word so full of joy, that they gladly break out in praising it, and say "how sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth!" And these who find God's word delightful are they who most consistently obey it. Let us therefore aim at loving good, as well as at doing good. Let us be aware that each one of these two things helps us towards advancing in the other. And let us constantly make the word of God our standard as to what

is good and what evil; studying to learn there what we ought to do, and what to avoid; what to love, and what to abhor.

Who, when encompassed with darkness, does not rejoice in the shining forth of light? Here then is one reason to love God's word; it is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Who that has sworn an oath would not wish to keep it? Here then is a motive to do God's will; we have entered into covenant to do it. Are we afflicted, and dejected? God's word can lift us up, and comfort us: shall not this make it sweet to our taste? Would we have our prayers and praises accepted by Him? His Scriptures tell us how we may approach Him acceptably, even by his Son: shall not this make us love them dearly? We live continually in jeopardy of death, we are continually beset with snares by our adversary the devil. But as long as we keep steadfastly in the way of God's commandments, we may triumphantly say to death, "Where is thy sting?" 1 Cor. 15. 55; we may reflect gladly on our blessed Lord's assurance, that Satan is fallen down from heaven; and we may trust in the help of the Holy Ghost, that the evil spirit shall not be able to hurt us upon the earth. Shall we not then rejoice from the heart in these precious testimonies of the Lord? Shall we not resolve to act up to the tenour of them, all the days of our life?

"Thy testimonies;" this is another term, occurring in this psalm, by which the holy Scriptures are described. God has in the Bible testified to man. He has borne witness of the truth. He has borne witness, on purpose that we might believe. Faith comes of being convinced by testimony. Faith is the feeling sure of that which we cannot see, and it arises upon our giving credit to the witness of those, who have seen the things to be believed. And who is it that has seen the things revealed in Scripture? "No man hath seen God at any time." John 1. 18. This is the saying of John the Baptist. And yet the Scriptures reveal God unto us. And the very first lesson which we learn from them, is to believe in God. Therein He has testified of Himself. He has testified to his prophets, and they to us. He has testified unto us by his Son, our Prophet, Priest, and King. And his testimony includes every thing that we need to know, both concerning Himself, his power, truth, justice, mercy, love; and also concerning our fall, our redemption, and the way of our reconciliation unto Him; how we are to be justified or counted righteous, how we are to be sanctified or made holy, how we may become happy in this world, and happy in the world which is to come. Oh let us then bear about with us in our thoughts continually these precious testimonies of God! Let us so thankfully lay to heart their inestimable worth, as to be able to say unto God, "O how I love thy law!"

*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

SAMECH.

AIN.

113 I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

115 Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.

119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee: and I am afraid of thy judgments.

121 I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

## LECTURE 977.

*The blessedness of having respect unto God's statutes.*

St. Paul has exhorted us to abhor that which is evil and to cleave to that which is good. See Rom. 12. 9. And the psalmist expresses the same notion when he says, "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." By nature we are apt to hate that which we ought to love, and are apt to love that which we ought to hate. By grace we learn to love God's law, to take delight in God Himself, to resort to Him as our Refuge and Defence: and at the same time to flee from sin, to renounce it, and at length even to hate the thought of it. And so also in regard to fear. By nature we stand in awe of man. We fear them that kill the body, them that can injure or annoy us. By grace we learn to fear God and Him only. We are confident that as for the wicked they can have no power to hurt us, except so far as God allows: and we are well aware, that the course they pursuing is one which leads to their own destruction. Why should we be afraid of those whose day must be soon over? Can we help fearing Him, who is for ever and ever?



Wide indeed is the difference between the hope of those who have respect unto God's statutes continually, and the fearful apprehension of those who habitually err from his statutes. That we may be impressed with this difference, let us consider what this word "statutes" means, as applied to the revealed will of God. It means the things which God has appointed, ordained, determined on. It may suggest to us his settled purpose to fulfil all that He has said, to bring every thing to pass that He has promised, and also every thing that He has threatened. It may lead us to think, how vain it is on our parts to resist the will of Him who is almighty; how foolish, how almost mad, to set up our own will against his, and to purpose to do otherwise than as He has purposed. We have indeed in some degree a will of our own. But then this is of his appointment. And He has so appointed it, on purpose for our trial, and for the manifestation of his own glory. And in his Scriptures, we find it appointed unto us, that we should submit our will to his. And we may be sure, that if we do not do this willingly, the loss is all our own.

Nor is this the only thing appointed or determined on by God, as revealed in his written word. We may look on all that is there revealed in this aspect. Is it prophecy, the foretelling of things future? As it is written so it will come to pass; for so has God appointed, such are his statutes. Is it the coming of Christ into the world, to make atonement for sin? This also has been purposed from of old, and so have the means whereby Christ made atonement, the means so unlike those which we naturally look for, the painful death of Him, who is the "way, the truth, and the life." John 14. 6. These things therefore may be numbered among God's statutes; the death of Christ, and all the blessed consequences thence arising, the free salvation offered through Christ to repentant sinners, on their believing in the redemption wrought by Him. Nor is it less firmly purposed in heaven, that they for whom Christ died, they who know of his dying for them, they who believe in the merits of his most precious death, should thenceforth live unto Him; should pass through the road of holiness on earth into everlasting life; or else, if they will not so serve Christ, should perish for evermore. To this statute also let us have respect continually, doing always that which we know to be our duty, praying God to teach us better what our duty is, relying on Him to help us in fulfilling it, and above all loving to do it, yea counting God's commandments joyous, prizing them as inestimably precious, esteeming them in every instance just and good, and therefore at once hating false ways, and loving the word of righteousness and truth.

*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

PE

129 Thy testimonies *are* wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

TZADDI.

137 Righteous *art* thou, O Lord, and upright *are* thy judgments.

138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous and very faithful.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

140 Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

141 I *am* small and despised: *yet* do not I forget thy precepts.

142 Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, and thy law *is* the truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: *yet* thy commandments *are* my delights.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

## LECTURE 978.

*The blessedness of being convinced of God's righteousness.*

The "righteousness" of God is here spoken of in connexion with his revealed word. And most eminently do the holy Scriptures set forth and manifest the perfect righteousness of Him, whose word they are. But for the information herein afforded, man might be apt to think, that the world was not made, or is not governed, by One who is altogether righteous. Man has been apt to think so. Man, destitute of the light of revelation, has been apt to reason like the servant in the parable, who said unto his master, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." Luke 19. 21. Many of the most unworthy notions in regard to God, which have prevailed to a great extent amongst the heathen, and which have also lent their evil influence to corrupt the doctrines held by Christians, have arisen from this readiness of mankind to doubt God's perfect righteousness. And therefore a very important view for us to take of holy hat the righteousness of God's testimonies is ever-



lasting, that they are calculated to convince our minds that God's righteousness is "an everlasting righteousness."

The proofs which the Scriptures give us of God's perfect righteousness are various and complete. They inform us, that when at the first God saw every thing that He had made, "behold, it was very good." Gen. 1. 31. They shew how sin entered in, by man's abusing God's gift of reasonable choice, the noble prerogative of his nature, imparted to him for his own happiness, and for his Maker's glory. They lead us to think that the fall of that evil spirit, by whom man was seduced from his allegiance to God, must have arisen from a like abuse of gifts graciously bestowed. The Scriptures having thus accounted for all the evil which we see around us, next illustrate the marvellous dealings of almighty God in making evil the means of good. They shew us how entirely He abominates iniquity, how pure He is, how holy, how altogether good, how resolved to punish sin; and at the same time how gracious to forgive, how willing to restore the fallen, as well as to reward plentifully them that stand upright. They set before us a chain of prophecy and of history, a system of laws, doctrines, and duties, exemplified in the lives of men like unto ourselves; all resting on one foundation, all springing from one central fact, the great fact of all revelation, the great truth which reconciles all differences, satisfies all doubts, and which proves God to be at once just, and the Justifier of sinners: this fact, that Christ the Son of God died on the cross, this truth, that He was crucified for our salvation.

Wonderful indeed are these testimonies; clear is the light given us by "the entrance" of these words. In our earnest longing after truth, we may be sure to find it here. God will cause light to shine upon our hearts and minds, the light that can make us free from the dominion of sin, and can make us resigned under the oppression of sinful men. Nay, not only will God's word give us resignation, it will teach us to glory in our sufferings, provided always that we suffer wrongfully, and unavoidably. Our grief is rather for them that do us this wrong. We grieve to think of their sinning against God. We would fain feel such deep concern for our brethren, when they plainly transgress the will of God, as that we may say truly with the psalmist, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." And however much iniquity may abound, however greatly it may prosper, we for our parts still cleave to God's precepts; and relying on that which He has revealed, we are ever ready to profess unto the Lord, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments."



*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

KOPH.

145 I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

151 Thou *art* near, O LORD: and all thy commandments *are* truth.

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

RESH.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

156 Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies; *yet* do I not decline from thy testimonies.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

160 Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for ever.

## LECTURE 979.

*The blessedness of having access to infallible truth.*

It seems but little to say of God's word that it is true. Yet truth is one of the chief of the things which are said throughout this psalm in the praise of holy Scripture. And the psalmist is giving the highest praise which language can express, when he declares unto almighty God, "All thy commandments are truth." For where indeed, except in holy Scripture, where can we be sure of always meeting with the truth? What book, except the Bible, is true in every respect from one end to the other? Man cannot say, or write the perfect truth in all things, if it were only by reason of his ignorance. Though he may not intend to deceive, and therefore be not guilty of falsehood, still the things which he states are often not the truth. They are not the things that really are. The words do not agree with the realities. And oftentimes there is also more or less of intention to deceive. There is a pretence of knowing that which is not known, or an attempt to conceal that which would not tell well, or a delight in exaggerating that which is likely to be admired. There are these and

countless other ways of falsifying words, which almost every man is strongly tempted to fall into more or less, or at least into some one or more of them. But "God cannot be tempted with evil," Jas. 1. 13, as S. James declares. It is doing violence to our most obvious notions of his divine majesty to suppose for one moment so much as the possibility of his designing to deceive. Nor is there any thing which God can fail to know. Hence all things, whatsoever He has told us in his word, must be altogether true. Oh happy resting place for the soul, in the wearisome wanderings of error, in the strife of tongues that prevails amongst mankind, and in the manifold contradictions which abound amongst those, who seek to set forth the truth according to man's opinions! Oh gift most precious; a book so full of matter, and that of deepest interest in every point of view, and yet not one word of his that can possibly be false; a history that goes back to the beginning of the world, and that stretches forward prophetically to the end thereof; a philosophy that tells as much as man can know of God, and of his dealings, and of our duties unto Him, of the world unseen, and else inscrutable, on which the noblest faculties of our nature delight to dwell, and long to be informed; a book which tells us of all these things with certainty infallible!

Well might the psalmist cry with his whole heart to God for grace to understand, and keep, and love the testimonies of this sacred volume. Well might his eyes waken in the midst of night, for study of this precious word of God. Well might he say to God, "all thy commandments are truth," and again, "Thy word is true from the beginning." And knowing that God's promises in his word are no less true than his commandments, well might he plead his steadfast adherence to the law and to the testimony, as a ground of hope, that God would not forsake him in trouble, but would hear the voice of his humble supplication. We may think perhaps at first sight that this is inconsistent with humility, to plead in prayer with God our own obedience to his word. But certainly the tenour of the psalmist's prayer, in the passage now before us, is to this effect. And if our conscience testifies that we are obedient, we may surely take comfort from the words of St. Peter, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." 1 Pet. 3. 12. And above all we have the warrant of our blessed Lord for mentioning in prayer that which He enables us to practise. For He has taught us to pray after this manner, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Matt. 6. 12.

*The psalmist commendeth the use of holy Scripture.*

SCHIN.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

163 I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

TAU.

169 Let my cry come near be-

fore thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

## LECTURE 980.

*Not tradition, but divine revelation.*

In concluding this psalm, we may do well to observe the testimony afforded by the whole of it to the excellency of holy Scripture, as being able, according to S. Paul's statement, to make us wise unto salvation. See 2 Tim. 3. 15. In almost every verse throughout this psalm, some new topic of commendation is expressed or is implied. And if so much might be said truly of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, how much more must it be applicable to the whole Bible, as we have it, the Old Testament completed by the New! Painful it is to think, that the Israelites in after times so completely forgot the tenour of this psalm, that, as our Lord charged them, they made the word of God of none effect by their traditions. See Matt. 15. 6. And doubly painful is the thought, that Christians with their Bible all complete, with free access to that which has been written by apostles and evangelists, as well as to the writings of Moses and the prophets, and with this special warning on the part of Christ against the risk of relying on traditions, should notwith-



standing have fallen into the snare, and should in like manner have thereby made the word of God of none effect.

It is indeed unquestionable, that they who heard the apostles preach, must have heard many things at their lips besides that which may be learnt from their writings. And hence we are naturally inclined to enquire into the earliest records of the Christian church, and are tempted to think, that if we could know what was then believed and practised, we should know to a certainty what it is that Christ would have us hold and do. But do not the facts, which appear in the Scriptures of the New Testament, tend to put us on our guard against attaching too much importance to primitive antiquity? Did not the churches err even whilst the apostles who founded them were alive? Did not the Romans need to be put upon their guard against the risk of saying, let us continue in sin that grace may abound? Were not the Corinthians divided between Paul and Apollos? Had not the Galatians been bewitched, that they should not obey the truth? And shall we then venture to rely implicitly on the tenets and practices which prevailed in the churches next after the apostles' times, as if these were sure to inform us rightly of that which was in the apostles' minds, that which they taught to their disciples by inspiration of God? By no means. Gladly we give all due respect to these our elder brethren in the Gospel. And we thank God for such light as their remaining writings help to throw on the early constitution of the Christian church. But their testimony is the testimony of man. Their precepts are the precepts of man. And we can rely implicitly in divine things on nothing except only the word of God.

Far then be it ever from us, who have God's written word for our direction, far be it from us to put any other judgments, statutes, or commandments, on a par with those which He has given us. Far be it from us to walk in any other way, than the way here set before us, to submit our consciences to any other law, than the law here laid down. In the interpretation of holy Scripture we ought indeed to use thankfully all the helps which God has given us. We ought to defer with much respect to the united judgment of the best of Christians in the best of times. But even the best of men, and therefore also the best of churches, are liable to error, yea, and also have erred. And those who lived nearest to the times of the apostles had many temptations to err greatly. And for the most part we can only learn their notions through the means of those who lived long afterwards. And were it otherwise, if we could know with certainty all they held and all they practised, and though there had not been circumstances strongly tempting them to adopt partial and erroneous views, still we should do well ever to remember, that only in the word of God can we be sure of finding always perfect wisdom and always perfect truth.

*The psalmist complaineth of the false and the quarrelsome.*

A Song of degrees.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 In my distress I cried unto<br>the LORD, and he heard<br>me.                             | 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty,<br>with coals of juniper.  |
| 2 Deliver my soul, O LORD,<br>from lying lips, and from a de-<br>ceitful tongue.           | 5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in<br>Mesech, <i>that</i> I dwell in the<br>tents of Kedar!  |
| 3 What shall be given unto<br>thee? or what shall be done<br>unto thee, thou false tongue? | 6 My soul hath long dwelt<br>with him that hateth peace.<br>7 I <i>am</i> for peace: but when I<br>speak, they <i>are</i> for war. |

## LECTURE 981.

*Of dwelling in the midst of the ungodly.*

The distress of which the psalmist speaks arose partly from the deceitful tongue of his enemies, and partly from their quarrelsome disposition. These are two chief sources of unhappiness whether in a family, in a neighbourhood, or in a state. There can be few who have not sometimes suffered by the lying lips and the deceitful tongue of others. Even in the near relationship of those who commonly dwell under the same roof, there is not always enough of true affection, or of true piety, to check the manifold temptations of deceitfulness. Even husbands and wives are found capable of practising deceit towards each other. No wonder that falsehoods are often spoken between parents and children, between brethren and sisters, between masters and servants. No wonder that in the less close connexions of social life, neighbours should be apt to speak falsely of each other, or that in the reports of public business and political transactions, it should be hard to meet with truth.

The injury done by falsehood, and its wickedness, may be measured to some extent by the vexation of mind which it is apt to inflict on the party falsely spoken of. In such a case we feel that unfair advantage has been taken, and a wrong inflicted which it is usually impossible to redress. The deceitful tongue is of course most apt to speak untruth where no one is at hand to contradict it. And if possible the practised liar will speak untruth against us, in some matter where no witness was present, or none likely to testify the truth, and in which we must therefore either suffer silently, or merely make assertion against assertion, and too, as if we put dishonour on the truth, by offering it to the hearer's choice, whether he will believe it or falsehood. A mortifying situation into which any one devoid of principle may place his fellow creature, by a well concerted lie. So easily is God's gift of speech abused! And so much the greater is the sin of thus abusing it, in proportion as it is difficult to protect ourselves from suffering by this gross abuse of it!

There is an unfair advantage of the like kind, which the quarrelsome often take over the peaceable. The more we shew ourselves inclined to peace, so much the more will the unjust and violent endeavour to gain their own ends by manifesting a resolution to be at war. Our submission to one wrong is the signal for inflicting another. And besides the losses which we may thus be put to, we have the vexation of feeling that our good is requited with evil, that our forbearance is wasted, our kindness imposed upon, our conscientious conduct interpreted as foolishness or cowardice. But be it so. Is not this the Christian's glory, to be made like unto his Master Christ in suffering wrongfully? What? would we rather be in fault and suffer for it? God forbid! Or would we envy the temporary triumph of those, whether they be quarrelsome, or deceitful, for whom there is prepared the dreadful retribution of the offended justice of God.

But why then need we be at all connected in society with such as these? Thus we are apt to ask in our impatience of wrong. Why should we at all sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar? Oh for some secluded habitation which none but true Israelites could approach! Oh for some select society of such as always speak the truth, and truly love each other! Such are the natural longings of the soul, when once it has learnt the delights of holiness, and experienced the pleasure of communication with the godly; especially if it has also been hurt and vexed by the evil conversation of the wicked. But no, it is not in this life that the tares and the wheat are to be parted from each other. Else we should lose one urgent motive towards setting our hearts on heaven. It is enough that we have here a communion of saints, a communion of spirit with all them that live godly in Christ Jesus. We are bound to hold at the same time a communion of every kindly office, of every Christian duty, with them that are impenitent sinners. And we must dwell cheerfully and even thankfully with the wicked for awhile, because it is God's will that we should do so, for our own better trial, and perhaps also through his blessing for their good, and undoubtedly for his greater glory in our everlasting joy.



*The psalmist professeth trust in God's help, and is assured of it.*

*A Song of degrees.*

1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.	5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.
2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.	6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.	7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall pre- serve thy soul.
4 Behold, he that keepeth Is- rael shall neither slumber nor sleep.	8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

### LECTURE 982.

*The assurance of safety given to those who trust in God.*

It has been supposed of many of the Psalms that they were written and recited in the form of a dialogue, or discourse between two or more parties. And this appears to be the case in the psalm before us. In the first two verses one party professes his dependence on the help of God. He is assured by another, in the remainder of the psalm, that God will effectually protect him. This is a striking method of putting before us the doctrine intended to be taught. And with this view the psalm might be written in this form, although the words were never meant to be recited by more than one person at a time. Or they might be meant for two singers of sacred songs to recite in alternate parts. Or it may be that David, or whoever else was the writer, first made his profession of confidence in God, as guided by inspiration, and then heard as it were the voice of the Spirit saying unto him the latter portion of the psalm in reply. In any one of these three cases, our practical conclusion is the same, namely, that, if we trust in God He will not fail to help us, if we rely with confidence on his protection He will preserve us from all evil.

Let us then endeavour to make this profession of the psalmist our own. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Perhaps it is of the heights of Sion that this is spoken. And the speaker means, that wherever he may be when in distress, he would look towards the temple at Jerusalem, and think of the God there worshipped as the only source of help and strength. Or perhaps we ought to take the translation which we find in the margin of our bibles, and read thus: "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? whence should my help come? My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." This would signify that there is no use in looking to the highest hills

for a secure refuge, except so far as God gives security; that none of his works, not even the greatest, are to be relied on for protection, but only God himself. And so it is written in the prophet Jeremiah: "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Jer. 3. 23.

And now if we can make this profession sincerely, if we feel this deeply, and declare it unto God devoutly, we may take unto ourselves, for our comfort, the delightful assurances which follow: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," that is to say, out of the path of righteousness. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber," that is to say, He will defend thee night and day. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." No enemy shall be too wily for his vigilance, or do any other harm than He permits. And we may be assured, He will permit no other harm than such as tends to greater good, ever to befall those who trust in Him. "The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." A new figure of speech is here introduced. We are led to think of a shade or shelter as giving us a lively notion of protection. And with the Lord to shade us, we take to ourselves this comfortable promise, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." That is to say, nothing shall hurt us; nothing shall blight, blast, or wither the precious plants of righteousness, which grow up in the strength of the Lord. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul." There is no limitation here. From the evil that is in the world, from the evil that is in our own hearts, from the evil snares of our adversary the devil, from all will the Lord preserve our souls, if we devoutly trust in Him. Nor is the length of time for which He will do this limited. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." Most comfortable assurance, reaching from time unto eternity. What need we fear, with God for our Defender? When need we be afraid, with Him to defend us for evermore? In life, in death, and in that which is to come after death, in all we may fully trust that He will keep us safe, if we have grace to rely wholly upon Him.

*David expresseth his affection for Jerusalem.*

A Song of degrees of David.

- 1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.  
 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.  
 3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:  
 4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.  
 5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.  
 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.  
 7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.  
 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.  
 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

## LECTURE 983.

*Of our longing for Jerusalem which is above.*

It is to be hoped that we can all heartily join in declaring, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Not to take pleasure in the solemn services of the congregation, would argue, that we are greatly wanting in faith and love, in devotion towards God, and in communion of spirit with each other. But David mentions, as an additional source of our satisfaction, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." For "the house of the Lord," which he meant to speak of, was the tabernacle, and in after times, the temple. And the going into it was the assembling of all the tribes from all parts of the land, at the great festivals appointed in the Law. This psalm appears to have been adapted to express the feelings of a devout Israelite, when on his way to any of these great assemblies of God's church. He is led to reflect with pleasure, that "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together." The unity of the church, which comprehended the whole nation, was one great subject of rejoicing. All the tribes went up together, "unto the testimony of Israel," that is to say, unto the place which the Lord had chosen to put his name there, and there to have the ark with the tables of his covenant kept in sacred charge. And their object in thus going up was "to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." There too were set the thrones of judgment; it was the seat of administration of civil government, according to statutes revealed from heaven, and by kings of heavenly appointment. Therefore would the pious Israelite exhort his brethren, and stir up himself, to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Therefore would he feel warranted in saying to this capital of his beloved church and nation, "they shall prosper that love thee." His own prayer he would therefore offer up devoutly, "Peace be within thy walls,



and prosperity within thy palaces." And he might well account for his zeal in behalf of Jerusalem, by these two considerations following; first, a brotherly regard for all the members of his church and nation, "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee;" and secondly, a reverence for the house of God, out of devotion to God himself, "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good."

We too have reasons not unlike to those of a devout Israelite for attachment to our church and nation. We ought to love our nation above all other reasons for our church's sake; because it is a Christian nation; because we may regard our fellow countrymen in general as brethren in Christ Jesus; because, according to the civil constitution of our land, the Christian religion, and the Christian church, are part and parcel of the law. We ought to love our church, because it is God's ordinance, God's church; because He has greatly blessed it, has delivered it from the gross corruptions, and from the grievous tyranny, of a foreign power, and has made it unto Himself a glorious church, not indeed without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. 5. 27, but approaching, or at least aiming to approach, towards that scriptural description of what his church ought to be. Of its faults there is no one so much to be deplored, nor so largely responsible for other blemishes, as that spirit of division in religion, which renders our church and nation no longer one but several communities; so that our Jerusalem must be looked upon as a city that is built at variance with itself. Oh let us then both pray and labour for its peace. For our brethren's sake, and for God's sake, let us follow after unity. And in all our thoughts, words, and works, as members of the church, or of the state, let us endeavour to foster genuine peace, as the only way to true prosperity.

But even if we were all united as we ought to be, there would be no one place on earth for all to meet at, no one temple at which all ought to worship here below. The ordinances of the Law of Moses are herein superseded by a better covenant. And our thoughts are directed to Jerusalem which is above, and to the blessed day when our feet shall stand within the gates of heaven. Thither our tribes are to go up. There shall Christ be seated "on the throne of his father David." Luke 1. 32. Then shall they which have followed Him be enthroned with Him in glory. See Matt. 19. 28. Rev. 3. 21. Thither therefore let our affections now ascend, in earnest prayer, and frequent meditation. And however diligently we study the word of promise, however highly we raise our expectations of that glorious temple in which we are to worship God to all eternity, we shall still find when we reach its courts, as the queen of Sheba said on beholding the earthly Jerusalem, that the half was not told us. See 1 Kings, 10. 7.

*The psalmist professeth his dependence on God.*

A Song of degrees.

1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. 3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until 4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

## LECTURE 984.

*The duty of serving God with faithfulness and love.*

It is one of the most obvious of the many practical fruits of the gospel, already realized to a great extent amongst us, far as we are from generally adopting the full spirit of gospel principles, that it has placed on a better footing the relation of master and servant; so much better, that we may fairly express the difference, by the different notions which we attach to the two words servant and slave. Before the times of the gospel, and up to the present time in those lands where the gospel is unknown, the state of servitude has been usually a state of slavery; not merely a situation of labour and dependence, but one of labour without wages, and of absolute dependence on the arbitrary will of another. But so natural is it for man to work, and so necessarily are we all dependent on each other, that even under such unfavourable circumstances, the slave has been often found to do his duty with affection, and the master often to treat his slave with kind consideration. And the watchful desire to please on the part of a servant towards his master, or of a maiden towards her mistress, might thus help to illustrate that humble, reverent, and devout affection, with which our eyes ought to wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us.

Under the gospel the master is enjoined to give to his servants that which is just and equal, remembering that he also has a Master in heaven. And whether he comply with this precept or not, the Christian servant, for his part, is directed to serve his master, not with eye service, that is to say, not merely to serve well when in sight, as pleasing man, but in singleness of heart as pleasing God. And most happy is the state of life, most happy the frame of mind, arising from the fulfilment of these heavenly instructions. Behold in the devout Christian servant one who enjoys many singular advantages towards a happy Christian life; exempt from many a temptation to care for the morrow, he looks with confidence to his master's means for food and raiment. Undisturbed by the distraction of doubt as to the best employ-

ment of his time and strength, he waits attentively on his master's orders; and if he may fulfil them lawfully, he has no reason to doubt, that in fulfilling them, he is doing his best to please God. Is he wronged? he looks to his master for protection. Is he in difficulty? he can apply to his master for advice. If he serves diligently, he has good reason to expect his master's praise. And he has the fear of his master's displeasure to assist in preventing him from doing wickedly. But it is by love that he is chiefly influenced, rather than by fear. He becomes thoroughly attached to his employer, watching for his interests, concerned for his good name, grieved for his affliction, and so anxious to assist him if under a reverse of circumstances, that instances are on record, in which the earnings of nearly a whole life have been cheerfully offered by a faithful servant, to relieve his master's wants.

And shall a servant prove so faithful and attached to his master upon the earth, and we not devoutly serve our Master which is in heaven? What? does He not feed us perpetually? Is it not to Him we owe our daily bread? And has He not bidden us take no thought for the morrow, but cast all our care on Him? Has He not set us all our work on earth, supplying us in his word with principles and conduct applicable to every hour of our lives, and with instances or examples to instruct us, how to carry our principles into practice? Does He not defend us in danger, protect us from wrong, or undertake to avenge us if wronged? Does He not both by his word, and by his ministers, advise, exhort, and reprove us? Has He not set before us on the one hand the rewards of heaven, on the other the terrible punishments of hell, to win us by hope, and to restrain us by fear? And above all, has He not sought to work on us by love? Has He not revealed to us love the most inconceivable, and set it before us as our motive for loving Him? Surely then, we shall not be slack in serving God. We shall not let it be said, that any other master is better served, than He who is at once our Master, and our Father, and the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In affliction we will look to Him for help. And not only so, but in prosperity we will still look to Him for happiness. Alike under contempt, and when held in highest honour, we will consider that to serve God is a higher honour than any that man can either give or take away. And though nothing of ours can ever profit Him, we shall rejoice to think that we are privileged by the faithful attachment of our hearts, and the faithful service of our lives to glorify his holy name.



*David's deliverance from his enemies on the side of Israel.*

*A Psalm of David.*

1. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	1. Then the proud waters had
2. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	2. <i>Blessed be the LORD, who</i>
3. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	3. <i>hath not given us as a prey to</i>
4. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	4. <i>Our soul is escaped as a bird</i>
5. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	5. <i>out of the snare of the fowlers:</i>
6. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	6. <i>the snare is broken, and we are</i>
7. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	7. <i>escaped.</i>
8. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	8. <i>Our help is in the name of</i>
9. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	9. <i>the LORD, who made heaven</i>
10. <i>Were not our eyes ever turned to the LORD?</i>	10. <i>and earth.</i>

*THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.*

*The deliverance of being the elect of God.*

There were the deliverances of Israel to which the words of this psalm might properly refer. Many were the occasions on which it seemed as if their enemies would have utterly destroyed them, but not that manifestly interposed, and delivered them by his mighty hand. We must not think that these things happened unto them without a remarkable application to ourselves. Great is the comfort which they are designed to afford us, in the warfare which we have to carry on against the world, the flesh, and the devil. What would be our sad case and condition, unless God were at our side. Is this comfort common to us all? How surely would it have been mine as to be swallowed up alive, and so to perish eternally. But what need we fear when God is with us? Is God be at our side, or, "if God be for us," as S. Paul puts the question, "who can be against us?" Rom. 8. 31. The thought of David in this psalm seems to be the same with that of the apostle thus writing to the Romans. And each of them appears to have had in view the same consolatory doctrine, the doctrine of God's election, or his choosing some amongst mankind in particular to be heirs of his promises, and members of his covenant in Christ Jesus.

According to the thankful acknowledgment of David, the Lord was on the side of the Israelites, in the conflict between them and their enemies. That is to say, God had chosen them to be his people. And this choice was his own free and gracious act. And many were the privileges which it conferred upon them. Not that God was not willing to be gracious to all mankind. Not that He did not graciously enter into covenant with Adam, and again with Noah. Undoubtedly He did. And had but all their children walked in his covenant, according to his will, we know not how different would have been the case with all the world, nor different from that which it has been in reality. But this

we know, that all, or nearly all mankind went far astray from God, both before the time of Noah, and after it. And this we know further, that God, having purposed from the first to redeem the fallen race of man, chose to Himself one people from among all the world, to whom the Redeemer should be sent in person, and by whose means his gospel should be made known to all the rest of mankind. This chosen people was admitted, by God's mercy, to the possession of many and singular privileges; whereof not the least was this, that they had God's assurance for it, that as long as they continued faithful to his covenant no enemies should be able to hurt them, for He would always be on their side. Nay, and even if they should be guilty of transgressing his commandments, and should thereupon be chastised with disaster and defeat, still would God be willing to be gracious, still would He receive them back again under his protection on their sincerely repenting, and still would He always bring it to pass, for his own name's sake, that in their worst transgressions, and consequent disasters, there should be a remnant faithful and obedient.

Now, in taking hence comfort to ourselves, we may look upon the case of the Jewish church as a type of the case of the Christian church. And whilst we are sure that God would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. 2. 4, we hold, that in the ignorance and unbelief of very many of mankind, God has been graciously pleased to elect or choose some to the knowledge and belief of saving truth. We find that we ourselves so know and so believe. And we are hereby encouraged to conclude, that we are amongst those so chosen. We thank God for this our election. We hold that his purpose in electing us is, that we through faith and holiness should attain unto everlasting life. And our belief that this is his purpose greatly helps and urges us, to give all diligence ourselves, to make our calling and election sure. See 2 Pet. 1. 10. If the Lord were not on our side, we feel that our enemies are too many, and too mighty, for us to have hope of victory. But "our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." We are persuaded that He, who is almighty, is willing to help us, is purposing to save us. Our persuasion of this his gracious purpose at once animates our courage, and inflames our devout affection. "We love him," as S. John says, "because he first loved us." 1 John, 4. 19. That He has called us in Christ Jesus to a knowledge of the truth, this we regard as a signal token of his love. And finding that through his election of grace we have actually been made members of his church, put into possession of the precious privileges of his adopted sons, we so much the more stedfastly resist, and so much the more heartily renounce that which can alone rob us of the gift thus given us, namely, our own wilful sin.

*The psalmist declareth the security of the righteous.*

*A Song of degrees.*

<p>1 They that trust in the LORD <i>shall be as mount Zion, which</i> cannot be removed, <i>but</i> abideth for ever.</p> <p>2 <i>As the mountains are round</i> about Jerusalem, so the LORD <i>is round about his people from</i> henceforth even for ever.</p> <p>3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righte-</p>	<p>ous put forth their hands unto iniquity.</p> <p>4 Do good, O LORD, unto <i>those that be good, and to</i> <i>them that are upright in their</i> hearts.</p> <p>5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: <i>but</i> peace shall be upon Israel.</p>
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#### LECTURE 986.

*The blessedness of trusting devoutly in God.*

It is a great thing to be among the elect people of God. It is yet a greater thing to make our calling and election sure, to continue steadfast in the faith and love of Christ our Saviour, to persevere in the path of his commandments unto the end of this transitory life. Now we may learn from the psalm before us, which is our best way of perseverance. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." It is not then in the strength of our own resolution that we can stand secure. It is not on the steadfastness of our own obedience that we can safely rely. Our trust must be in God. The more devoutly, the more entirely, we put our whole confidence in Him, so much the less are we in danger of swerving from our Christian course, and falling away unto perdition. It is not our own strength that will hold us up. Neither is it so absolutely the grace of God, as that He has no respect herein to our disposition of heart. It is needful that we should trust in his help, as well as that He should be pleased to help us. It is if we trust in Him that He will help us. It is as long as we continue to trust in Him that He will continue to hold our footsteps that we slip not, or if we fall to lift us up.

But how, then, shall we attain to trusting in Him? Must we not look to Him for help in this very thing? Must we not pray Him to help our unbelief? Undoubtedly we must. But at the same time, we must profess our own faith, such as we have already attained to; according to the instance set before us in the gospel, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Mark, 9. 24. And so also we must ask of God to teach us to pray. See Luke, 11. 1. But like the disciples who thus asked of God, we must pray to God in thus asking Him. Without God's grace we can neither persevere unto the end, nor turn to God at the first. His grace it is, bestowed on us for our Saviour's sake, that both implants in us a good will towards his service, and works with us when we have that good will. And yet, from the very first



sowing of the good seed in our hearts, its growth is affected more or less by the kind of soil there met with; so that in some it never seems to grow at all, in others barely to come up, and then to wither; in others, to shew well at first, but yet to bear no fruit; in others, to bring forth fruit unto perfection.

As far then as it depends upon ourselves, let us follow the method which God's word suggests for attaining unto a salutary trust in Him. Let us dwell on the assurances which God's word contains, calculated to enliven and confirm our trust. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." Here the psalmist gives us a most encouraging assurance. Here we are led to reflect, that God is continually around us and about us, for our protection from the enemies of our souls. It was indeed of defence against the assaults of man that the psalmist wrote these words. And it is of the rod of wicked men, of their power to hurt the righteous, that he says it shall not rest upon their lot, not long remain in force, not longer than they can bear it without being tempted to do wrong. But we may apply the same assurance to the rod of our spiritual enemies. For thus does S. Paul write to the Corinthians: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10. 13.

Our great point then towards perseverance in well doing, is to persevere in trusting humbly and devoutly. And our way to trust humbly, and devoutly, is to dwell much on the assurances of God's word, that He will help us largely. We err if we think that any stedfastness of our own purposes, any reliance on our own strength, can secure us from falling. We err if we fail to direct our efforts towards a more devoted trust in God, rather than to greater resolution in ourselves. But we should err also, and it would be a most fatal error, if we were to think that we need make no effort at all; if we were to argue, that because God is working for us largely, therefore we need not work at all. As if on purpose to obviate this error, the apostle has drawn the very opposite conclusion, and bids us work out our own salvation, because of God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. See Phil. 2. 12. And so the psalmist teaches us, at the conclusion of this psalm, praying God to do good "unto them that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts;" and at the same time stating, that "as for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel."

*The psalmist celebrateth the return from captivity.*

*A Song of degrees.*

<p>1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.</p> <p>2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.</p> <p>3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.</p>	<p>4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams of the south.</p> <p>5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.</p> <p>6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.</p>
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#### LECTURE 987.

*Our way to reap the harvest of holiness and heaven.*

There is good reason to think that this psalm must refer to the deliverance of the Israelites from their great captivity in the land of Babylon. It expresses their joy in these animated words: "we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." It testifies that the heathen ascribed the deliverance of Israel to the arm of the Lord: "then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." It represents the Israelites as responding to this testimony of the heathen, and thankfully asserting the same thing: "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." It then describes them as praying, ere they yet were free, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south." And finally it sets forth the answer, which we may conceive to have been given to their prayer: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Let us apply these expressions to our own deliverance from the bondage of iniquity, through the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Do we feel a degree of joy in our redemption, that can match with the gladness of the Israelites as here described? If not, is not this the reason, we are not as sensible of the misery of being sinners as the Israelites were of the misery of being captives? Yes, this is our fundamental error. Sin is not as great an evil in our eyes as it ought to be. Many amongst us are well content to serve sin. All of us are by nature inclined to prefer the slavery of sin to the freedom of holiness. First therefore we need to be made to feel a longing after true liberty. And as there is nothing more deplorable in the condition of a slave, than that he does not care to be free, so is there nothing more indispensable to our establishment in the happiness of a holy life, than that we should be deeply convinced of the wretchedness of a life of sin. In proportion to the depth of this conviction will be the liveliness of our joy, on being set free, and on believing that we are so, from the bondage of iniquity. Oh that

our joy may be like that which is here described, manifest in the cheerfulness of the countenance, and expressed by the utterance of the lips, out of the full thankfulness of the heart! Oh that it may be a happiness so great, as would almost make us doubt whether such bliss really can be ours, were it not that we are assured of its being so by God's unerring word! See 1 Cor. 2. 9.

But if we are far from thus rejoicing in the Lord, how greatly do we also fail in regard to the next point suggested by this psalm! How little occasion do we of this Christian nation give to the heathen for saying, "The Lord hath done great things for them!" And in our communication with those in heathen countries, whom we ought to impress with this view of our case, how little do we usually say of the great things which God has done in our behalf! Rather we have been apt to set before them the great things which we conceive we have done for ourselves. We take credit with them even for our Christian faith; as if it were the fruit of our own superior sagacity, rather than the gift of God, that we are a Christian people. And the notion which they must be likely to form concerning us is how clever we are, how powerful, how rich, and how busy in searching after riches, rather than how largely gifted with the grace of God, how entirely bent on profiting by the privileges of the gospel, how supremely anxious to manifest the joy and peace of believing unto them that know not Christ, in order that they also may share with us in the inestimable gain of his salvation.

If the thought of these our deficiencies fill our hearts with shame and grief, if it lead us to think, that though we have indeed been redeemed by Christ, we still need to pray to God to turn again our captivity, let us listen to the gracious answer to our prayer with which this psalm concludes; let us learn that to sow in tears is our way to reap in joy. A hearty repentance for these our defects and misdoings, a lively apprehension for the peril of those who as yet know not the gospel, an earnest compassion for their miserable case, together with a keen compunction for having ourselves done so little for the edification of our brethren, these are our means towards peace and joy both for ourselves and them. These tears of pity and repentance lead to smiles and songs of rejoicing. And they who thus water in their own hearts the precious seed of the gospel, they who thus bear it and scatter it abroad, with heartfelt sorrow for the misery which is in the world through ignorance and sin, these may look for an abundant harvest of holiness and of happiness, here and hereafter. May God forgive us, if hitherto we have too little cared for the salvation of others, too little laboured to make our light shine before men with a view to their glorifying Him! May God grant that many more of those, whose freedom has been purchased by the death of Christ, may both know that they are free, and use their liberty to his glory, and to their own eternal joy!



*The psalmist ascribeth every good thing to God's blessing.*

*A Song of degrees for Solomon.*

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| <p>1 Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.</p> <p>2 <i>It is</i> vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: <i>for</i> so he giveth his beloved sleep.</p> <p>3 Lo, children <i>are</i> an heritage</p> | <p>of the LORD: <i>and</i> the fruit of the womb <i>is</i> his reward.</p> <p>4 As arrows <i>are</i> in the hand of a mighty man; so <i>are</i> children of the youth.</p> <p>5 Happy <i>is</i> the man that bath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 988.

*Our way of peace and prosperity is to trust in God.*

The first great lesson which this psalm teaches us, is this, that without the blessing of the Lord, our labour and anxiety is of no avail, in regard to any object which we wish to compass. And this is instanced in three different things, the building of a house, the safeguard of a city, and the rearing up a family; things which are apt to cause very much anxious thought to those engaged in them, things in which we are very apt to forget, how vain is all our own exertion, except so far as God is pleased to give us his blessing. House building is first mentioned. And perhaps it is the house of the Lord that is here referred to. Perhaps Solomon, whose name is mentioned in the title of this psalm, was here led to express his conviction, that without God's blessing all his labour in building God's temple would be fruitless. We may certainly do well to lay to heart this reflexion, not only in the building of our dwellings, but also in regard to the many churches which need to be built, or in regard to any church in particular which we are concerned in building. Too much is often reckoned on from man's exertion. Too much is often ascribed to man's diligence. Our duty is this, not to exert ourselves less, but to rely on God's blessing more. We ought to be more diligent in praying for his help, as well as in giving to his works. And we ought to be more careful, that in our success we ascribe all the glory to his name.

But whilst we thus remember, that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it;" let us also bear in mind, that "except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain." Perhaps Solomon was led to this reflexion, when he had been engaged in completing the walls of Jerusalem. See 1 Kings 9. 15. Or as others think, the psalm may belong to the times of Nehemiah, and may refer to the difficulties then experienced in building the temple and fortifying the city. In either case, it plainly teaches us, to look much more to God's blessing than we are apt to do, for the safety and prosperity of our own

highly favoured nation. Preeminent as we are in prosperity, and signally successful as we have been, in resisting and defeating the most fierce and mighty conqueror of these later times, we are especially bound to acknowledge, that it was not in our own strength that we won the victory; that it was not by dint of our own vigilance alone, that these realms, and almost only these, were kept in safety, when rapine was let loose to lay waste the fruitful lands, and to level the fenced cities, and to overturn the long established institutions, of the most civilized portion of the world. May we never cease to be thankful unto God for these distinguished blessings! May we ever be forward to own our deep conviction, that except so far as God pleases to continue his effectual protection, no wealth, no skill, no strength of ours, can secure our national prosperity!

The third point here remarked upon is this, that "children are an heritage of the Lord." This is a subject of great anxiety with many; they that have none being apt to long for them, and they that have them being distressed to provide for them, or harassed with anxiety in rearing them up, and placing them out in life. How much of all this trouble and distress would be avoided, if men would but lay to heart the assurances here given us, that "children are an heritage of the Lord," and that "happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them!" Let not those, who have them not, murmur at that which is God's appointment. Let not those who have them regard as a burden that which they ought to receive thankfully as a gracious gift. Like every other gift of God, it does indeed increase the responsibility of those to whom it is given. But they do wrong to multiply to themselves herein sources of vexation and anxiety. One thing is needful, and one only, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is the only point of supreme importance. This is the only thing for which they ought to be deeply anxious. And this is a point, in which it must be obvious to every one, that no solicitude of man can profit without the blessing of the Lord. Whether then it be in regard to children that we are tempted to take anxious thought, or in regard to the safety of our nation, or in regard to the sufficiency of our churches, or the comfort of our homes, or in regard to any other matter whatsoever, let us attend to the apostolic exhortation: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4. 6, 7. Yes; "so he giveth his beloved sleep," so the faithful servants of God attain to peace and to prosperity in all things; not by trusting in their own exertions, but by making them without trusting in them, by working diligently, and watching carefully, but all the while feeling deeply, and acknowledging heartily, that all their dependence is on God.

*The psalmist promiseth blessings to the godly.*

*A Song of degrees.*

1 Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD: that walketh in his ways.	4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.	5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.	6 Yea, thou shalt see thy chil- dren's children, and peace upon Israel.

#### LECTURE 989.

*The holy happiness of domestic life.*

Not long after the account of the creation, we read in the book of Genesis that the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him." Gen. 2. 18. And who shall say how great was the sum of happiness herein provided for the human race? Who can sufficiently thank God, for adding this unto his many other gifts to man, this gift of wife and children, and all the endearments hence arising in domestic life? Here is a source of pleasure open alike to rich and poor; a field of pleasurable duties, supplying to the devout husband and father matter of continual thankfulness to God. Here is a scene of bliss, speaking of those who live according to their marriage vows, on which we may well believe that God who made us looks down with gracious approbation, a scene of mutual help, and mutual affection, an orderly submission of one to another, the children subject to the parents, the wife to the husband, and this subjection so tempered by love, that the weakest have ever the most ready help, and the most tender regard, from those who in age or sex are strongest. Here is a connexion of parentage, that seems to give us some idea of how we are all beholden unto God for life and livelihood; He vouchsafing to represent Himself in Scripture as our Father which is in heaven. And further it is such as can alone express, as far as human language can express at all, the relation of the everlasting Father, to the everlasting Son, who together with the Holy Ghost are one almighty God. And here we have also, in the married state, an union so close, so sacred, as to be fit to represent and signify to us the spiritual union that subsists between Christ and his church.

We need not then marvel that the psalmist should dwell upon the happiness of domestic life, as one chief reward which God gives on earth to those who fear Him. We need not be surprised to find, that a wife fruitful as a vine, and children flourishing like olive plants, should be promised to the man "that walketh in his ways;" to sweeten the daily task of labour by the thought that its produce will be shared by those who are dearly loved. Rather,



with the words of this psalm before us, we shall be slow to believe, that any other part of Scripture can countenance, as some imagine, a system the most opposite to this. We shall be slow to receive any interpretation of other passages in the word of God, which would amount to a censure of the marriage state, and would range the married below the single in the scale of Christian holiness. We believe that all such interpretations are erroneous. We hold that all such passages have respect to that which S. Paul calls "the present distress." 1 Cor. 7. 26. We consider that they give the preference to a single life, not as to a state holier in itself, but as to one which may afford better opportunity, in some cases, and under some circumstances, to serve the Lord without distraction. But in most cases, and for most men, we doubt not that the married state is best. And whereas there are some who go so far as absolutely to forbid this state of life unto the clergy, we are inclined on the contrary to hold, that it is especially the best for them. For such seems to be the tenour of S. Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus. See 1 Tim. 3. 11; Tit. 1. 6. And certainly the ministers of religion ought to be as safe as possible from all temptation, and as much as possible above all suspicion. Moreover it behoves the minister of God in general, to be unto the rest a pattern, in the important duty of ruling well his own house, having his family in due subjection, and rendering his home the centre of all social charities, by making it the abode of domestic love.

Far be it then from us to listen unto those, who do dishonour to that "holy estate," which Christ "adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee." (Matrimony Service.) Neither let us on the other hand give ear unto them, who without directly finding fault with holy matrimony, yet speak of children as a curse rather than as a blessing; complain of their great numbers, fear that there will not be bread enough to feed so many mouths, and seem to doubt whether He who said, "Be fruitful, and multiply," Gen. 1. 28, has made adequate provision for the support of those who are thus brought into the world. Let it be enough for us that God has spoken. Let us unfeignedly trust in Him. To have a numerous and increasing family is to be regarded as an instance of his goodness. To see our children's children is a blessing worthy to be mentioned in the same breath with "the good of Jerusalem," and with "peace upon Israel." There is ample room in the wide spread earth for many more than now inhabit it. It is the luxury of man, the wasteful selfish luxury both of rich and poor, that accounts for the destitution so frequently complained of. God's power is not shortened; his bounty slackens not. And we surely need not doubt of his providing ample food for the increasing numbers of mankind, when we consider this one thing, that however many times as many they may ever be, He has graciously provided for them all the means of everlasting salvation.

*The psalmist rejoiceth in the troubles and deliverances of Israel.**A Song of Asaph.*

1 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say	5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.
2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.	6 Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up:
3 The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.	7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand: nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
4 The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.	8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord.

## LECTURE 990.

*The real importance, and amendment of the national church.*

If we had no other argument to prove that afflictions are not always a token of God's displeasure, but are often sent in mercy to correct those whom He still vouchsafes to love, it would be enough to contemplate the manifold sufferings endured from time to time by Israel his people. "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say, Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me." So many indeed were the afflictions of the Israelites, that it is hard to say which of them in particular is here referred to. It is hard to say which of their many troubles the psalmist describes in saying, "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows." It is hard to say of which deliverance from trouble he here thankfully testifies, "The Lord is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked." Sure we are from the experience of their history, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Heb. 12. 6. Sure we may be, that it is good for us to be afflicted; that having so many sins to repent of, it is good to have seasons of affliction, wherein we are more likely to call our sins to remembrance, to repent of them heartily, to renounce them thoroughly, and to begin to resist them stedfastly.

This is true of the case of each single Christian. It is no less true of the case of each Christian church, each single national church, such as we may well conceive that our Lord designed each Christian nation to be, a church whole and undivided in itself, and united by the most intimate communion with all other distinct national churches, in one holy church universal. Looking then to the history of the Christian church in our own nation, and regarding it as a branch of that which has been grafted in the place of Israel of old, and which has become what Israel once was, the elect people of God, we may say with truth, as Israel might

aforetime, that we have been on many occasions greatly afflicted; and that for all this, they who have afflicted us have not prevailed against us. We have been in bondage under a foreign and despotic spiritual power. And since we have cast off its yoke, we have not altogether escaped either from the assaults of its baffled malice, or from the contagion of its corrupt principles. In our times of tribulation it becomes us to consider our ways, to examine whether we have not been largely leaning on the arm of flesh; whether we have not learnt from Rome to estimate too highly in the church the influence of wealth, and rank, and talent; and to forget, that according to the principles of the gospel, the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and they that bear rule in his church ought to be as the servants of all, and they that would be truly rich must lay up treasure in heaven. Whilst on the other hand no small number amongst us have not only transgressed the principle of unity, so frequently, and fully, and affectionately, urged on our attention in the gospel, but have altogether set it at nought, denied its application to the Christian community, and held it to be a part of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, for every man to follow his own wayward will, in the choice and exercise of his religion.

If our nation, as a Christian nation, and a Christian church, has fallen into sins like these, no wonder that it has been visited by proportionate afflictions. Its strength as a church has been wasted by disunion. Its efficacy, as an instrument of God's glory in the conversion of souls, has been impaired by the spirit of worldly wisdom, and by the pride of worldly wealth. Having greatly neglected to provide for the edification of its rapidly increasing members, it has been gradually losing its hold on many of the institutions of the country, and on the affections of multitudes of the people. And at length it is again threatened with invasion and desolation, by the Babylon of modern days, the power, which under guise of spiritual dominion, gratifies most largely worldly ambition, the church, which under a life of formal superstition cherishes infidelity of heart. But, God be thanked, our afflictions have been greatly blest in our serious repentance and amendment. Never was there within these realms a greater amount of real piety, a more enlightened attachment to the true church, or a more devout submission of the mind and heart and life to the genuine principles of the gospel. In this renewal and reformation of our ways, we have the best ground for trusting, that the Lord will defeat the malice of our enemies. They that hate our Zion will be confounded and turned back. It is God's promise to his church in all ages. And we may without lack of charity pray for its fulfilment. \* And as we pray that the enemies of our Zion may wither away and come to nought, let us intend and devoutly desire in our hearts, that they may cease to exist as our enemies, by becoming and continuing our friends.



*The psalmist declareth his hope of mercy.*

*A Song of degrees.*

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| 1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.                                  | do I hope.   |
| 2 Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. | 6 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: <i>I say, more than they that watch for the morning.</i> |
| 3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?                 | 7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD <i>there is</i> mercy, and with him <i>is</i> plenteous redemption.               |
| 4 But <i>there is</i> forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.             |  |
| 5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word                            | 8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.  |

### LECTURE 991.

*The comfort and security of hope.*

In the epistle to the Hebrews, "the hope set before us," is described as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." Heb. 6. 18, 19. And so the psalmist found it to be, when he was encompassed with the waves of affliction, and ready to sink in the depths of distress. It is evident that the sorrow which so greatly troubled him was sorrow on account of sin. For it was the hope of having his sins forgiven which proved an anchor to support his soul. Let this turn our thoughts to the heinousness of our sins. Let it lead us to examine, whether they cause us as much sorrow and distress of mind as they ought to do. When we think of them, and endeavour to repent of them, do we ever feel with the psalmist that we are in "the depths;" like mariners overtaken by a storm at sea, tossed to and fro by winds and waves, no sky but dismal clouds; no sun or moon or stars, to help them in their course, nor any friendly harbour nigh at hand, to yield them shelter. Deep are the waters, and the vessel at its utmost strength no match for the fury of the storm. But behold an anchor is let down successfully. The vessel is arrested in its course. And they who were lately on the point of being shipwrecked, now wait in safety till the storm is over. What joy for them that thus are rescued! How impressive a lesson to ourselves, of the joy which we ought to feel on finding, that "with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption!"

The psalmist proved his hope by praying. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Without hope it seems almost impossible to pray. Without some expectation of being heard and forgiven, few if any would ask for the forgiveness of sins. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" If God were extreme to mark what is done amiss, and if we were under the impression that He *is so*, our souls could have no choice but to despair. "But there *is* forgiveness with thee;" this is the foundation of our hope, this

is the ground on which the anchor of the soul holds fast; there is forgiveness with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Mercy, this is the glorious attribute of God, fully brought to light in the gospel. Mercy through Christ, this is the gospel. God is at once "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3. 26. He is willing to forgive. He rejoices in forgiving. And we have but to believe in the full and free atonement made for us by our Saviour, we have but to believe heartily, and repent thoroughly; and, behold, we are forgiven. There is now no place left for despair. Out of the depths, however deep, we now call on God with hope; with lively hope, and yet with reverent fear; with lively hope of safety, and yet with a strong conviction, that our sin and danger is all the greater, if we neglect so great salvation, if we abuse such undeserved grace. Forgiveness there is with God; but not such as that men may presume upon the strength of it to sin wilfully, not such as to give them liberty of continuing in sin, not such as that it should make them not afraid of sinning; but rather, as the psalmist devoutly owns to God, "that thou mayest be feared."

Watching then continually against this awful abuse of the mercifulness of the Lord, we shall do well to rest our hope on the most firmly settled conviction, that He is infinite in mercy. Watching that we be not deluded to think that we are at anchor when we are not, and so suddenly perish unawares, we may wisely trust our life eternal to the assurance, that there is forgiveness with Him; we may rely on the declaration of his mercy in his word, without doubt or misgiving, however many and however great may be the sins with which our conscience is burdened. "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." There is no limit, here set down, as to the number or the kind of sins to which God's pardon is extended. And so the angel testified of our Saviour, ere yet He was born into the world: "he shall save his people from their sins." Matth. 1. 21. How deep then ought to be our thankfulness for his love, how patient our waiting, and yet how ardent our longing, for his grace! How fervent ought to be our desire for the consummation of our bliss in heaven, the full enjoyment of the things we hope for. Hope is, as it were, to lie at anchor; but we are not yet safe on shore. The soul is like the watch upon the deck, longing to descry the morning light, like the shipmen with whom S. Paul was overtaken in a storm, who when they had "cast four anchors out of the stern," still "wished for the day." Acts 27. 29. Let us long for the day of the Lord, "more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." Let us long for the day when our pardon shall be publicly declared, and when our redemption, perfect though it be in Christ already, shall be further perfected to ourselves in this, that we can thenceforth sin no more.

*David professeth his humility.*

A Song of degrees of David.

1 LORD, my heart is not quieted myself, as a child that haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: is weaned of his mother: my neither do I exercise myself in soul is even as a weaned great matters, or in things too child.

high for me.

3 Let Israel hope in the LORD

2 Surely I have behaved and from henceforth and for ever.

## LECTURE 992.

*The duty of submissiveness.*

For men in general it is dangerous to make professions of excellency in religion. For an inspired writer this method may be a useful way of teaching us what we ought to practise. David, who according to the title appears to have been the author of this psalm, might without risk of spiritual pride be directed to say of himself to God, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." God, who taught him to say thus for our instruction, could keep him from vain glory in saying it. He could still be that which he describes, a pattern of humility, even whilst declaring himself to be so. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." In all which we may well think that David was a type of One more high and more humble than himself, our Lord and Saviour Christ. For He also at once was a pattern of humility, and preached Himself as our example herein, saying, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matt. 11. 29. A wonderful exhortation; which only He who really did no sin could pronounce without the slightest impropriety! A setting forth of his own conduct, for our good and for God's glory, which, considering how far Christ ever is above all virtue and all praise of man, itself was an instance of humility!

The illustration of humility by the case of a weaned child is according to the usual method of the Scriptures; which, unlike the writings of man, seek not to exalt their subject by comparison with things rare and great, but rather aim at making things which are divine plain to human understanding, by reference to the most familiar things of earth. A weaned child is forced to acquiesce in the change of its food, to put up with the loss of that which it loves, and to do without that which it desires; and all this without understanding why it is thus dealt with. Our Lord bids us become as little children, and tells us, that unless we do so we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. See Matt. 18. 3. The point before us is very probably one of those which He intended in that remarkable injunction. Subjection of our will, suppression of our natural pride, acquiescence in that which is



ordered for us, against our will, and beyond our understanding, these are the features of a child like character, which Christ in the gospel, and David in the psalm before us, unite to recommend for our adoption.

We all know how hard to attain these graces are. We are all aware, that though a child may be forced to submit, even a child begins very early to manifest wilfulness and pride. We are conscious, that as we grow up, these haughty thoughts and high looks are apt to grow up with us. We are apt to resist the exercise of authority, even when it is from God. We are apt to demand a reason that shall satisfy our own minds, even when God himself reveals to us his truth, gives us his commands, or visits us with his dispensations. Hence the murmurs of many under affliction. Hence the disobedience and unbelief of many more. Hence the difficulty we find in becoming, as this psalm directs us, child like in submission, whilst in understanding we are men. But this is the state which we must endeavour to attain unto; the reason of the full grown man practising the submissiveness of the weaned infant, not out of compulsion, but by free choice, God's Spirit helping us so to choose, because we believe that God would have us so submit. It is to ask for no other reason in obeying God's commands, than to be assured that He has commanded, to believe his truth simply, because He has spoken it, to bow to his dispensations, and receive them thankfully, because they are so ordered by Him.

And let not the objector answer, that the temper and conduct here described are unworthy of the dignity of man, unsuited to form the proper character of a reasonable being. So far from it, it is our own reason that obliges us to obey God without question or delay. Our own reason, unless it be blinded by our pride, shews us that we must be less in the sight of God than a weaned child is to us, less fit to maintain our own will, less entitled to demand reasons of Him, less warranted to trust in our own competency for judging of that which He orders or reveals. Our own reason, if it be really enlightened, teaches us not to trust in our reason, acknowledges that there are many things too high for us, demonstrates the folly of our attempting to resist the will of God, and the wisdom of submitting instantly with a good grace where submission cannot be avoided in the end. And above all, our reason, once convinced that the Scriptures are the word of God, constrains us to believe them implicitly, and to obey them unreservedly. We have no longer any doubt that submissiveness is good for us to practise, when we find the psalmist professing, as a rule for our direction, that he behaved himself as a weaned child. And however much we might be otherwise disposed to hope and trust in ourselves, we are silenced at once by the psalmist's exhorting us: "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever."

*The psalmist rehearseth David's desire to build the temple.*

*A Song of degrees.*

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|---|---|
| <p>1 LORD, remember David, <i>and</i> all his afflictions:</p> <p>2 How he sware unto the LORD, <i>and</i> vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;</p> <p>3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;</p> <p>4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, <i>or</i> slumber to mine eyelids.</p> <p>5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.</p> <p>6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephraim: we found it in the fields of the wood.</p> <p>7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.</p> <p>8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.</p> <p>9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.</p> <p>10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of</p> | <p>thine anointed.</p> <p>11 The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.</p> <p>12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.</p> <p>13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired <i>it</i> for his habitation.</p> <p>14 This <i>is</i> my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.</p> <p>15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.</p> <p>16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.</p> <p>17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.</p> <p>18 His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.</p> |
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#### LECTURE 993.

*Of desiring to serve God in our heavenly habitation.*

From the revelation of the Law on mount Sinai to the time of David, the services of God, as ordained in the Law, had been performed in a tent or tabernacle; of which we know that at different periods it stood at different places in the holy land. But God had spoken in the Law of choosing a place out of all the tribes to put his name there. See Deut. 12. 5. And this choice, or appointment, was to be made, according to God's promise, when He should have given the people rest from all their enemies round about, so that they dwelt in safety. Now, this was a state of things never before realized in the same degree as it was in the times of David. And David might therefore reasonably hope, that God would give him the honourable office of establishing the divine service in the place in which it should ever after remain.

The anxiety of David on this subject is the first thing mentioned in the psalm before us. Next follows the resolution to enter into the tabernacle and worship therein, when it was found in one of those places to which from time to time it was



removed. After this, we have the prayer that God would arise into his rest, that is to say, would fix upon the place of permanent habitation in which the ark should be settled. With this is connected a prayer for the righteousness of the priests, and for the joyfulness of the people, together with an earnest request that God would not turn away the face of his anointed, would not reject the supplication of the prophet, priest, or king, whichever he might be, who was the writer of the psalm. The conclusion of the psalm is God's answer to this prayer. And it agrees exactly with the tenour of the promises, which, according to the sacred history, were given at various times by God to David, in behalf of Solomon, and his sons after him, with a prophetic reference to Christ. Now we learn in the Acts of the Apostles, that David knew that this was spoken of the Messiah. For S. Peter speaks of David as "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." Acts 2. 30. We may therefore, justly suppose, that his earnest desire to "find out a place for the Lord" arose from his faith in a Saviour to come. And we may deem it not improbable, that he expected the coming of the Saviour to take place when the "habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" should be settled.

David then looked beyond the types to the things typified; beyond the services of the tabernacle to Him whose sacrifice they represented. He looked with faith, though but indistinctly informed as to the truth of the gospel yet to be revealed. We, having that truth fully set before us, are bound to look still onward. Our faith must be directed to a heavenly habitation, and to the rest which Christ's faithful people will there enjoy with Him for evermore. We look indeed back in point of time to Christ crucified. But we must also look forward to Christ glorified, to Christ coming the second time in glory. We worship Him now in the tabernacle of the flesh, in this our frail, transitory, corruptible body. We trust, that when He shall appear the second time, we shall worship Him in a body that is incorruptible and full of glory. For we know, as S. Paul says of himself and the Corinthians to whom he writes, we know, as all faithful Christians may therefore say in all humility, "we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 1 Cor. 5. 1. Oh that we may so live whilst here as to realize hereafter this our knowledge! Oh that we may now so fervently set our affection on things above, that we may be able to say further with St. Paul, in regard to our present tabernacle, "in this we groan," and that, not so much referring to our present sufferings, but as the apostle says, "in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven!" 2 Cor. 5. 2.



*David highly commendeth unity among brethren.*

A Song of degrees of David.

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity !  
 2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard : that went down to more.  
 3 As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion : for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.

## LECTURE 994.

*The happiness of dwelling together in love.*

It is highly probable that this psalm was composed by David, on his being established as king of all the tribes of Israel. For at first he was only king of his own tribe Judah. But after a time, "all the elders of Israel came to the king in Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel." 2 Sam. 5. 3. Upon this happy union of all the tribes in one kingdom, after their long continued divisions, it was most seasonable for David to exclaim: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" "Behold;" but which way shall we now look to see it? We can find this happy state of things most beautifully described, most powerfully recommended, in the word of God. We can refer, for an instance, to the tribes of Israel, when united afresh in one nation, and in one church, under the sovereignty of David. We can point to the first band of Christian brethren, of whom it is stated in the Acts of the Apostles, that "all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." Acts 2. 44, 45. But where can we find such brotherhood as this now actually flourishing? What nation now supplies us with an instance of it? What church can we meet with thus unimpaired by schism? Nay, what single family comes altogether up to this description, is so thoroughly united, that husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, master and servants, live as if they were altogether of one heart and of one mind, both in things temporal and in things eternal? Too true it is that selfishness holds the place of love in many a heart solemnly pledged to serve and love Christ. Too true it is that division and strife are not only prevalent, but even are often justified, as if not inconsistent with the unity of brethren, whether in public or in private life, whether in the state or in the church.

David commends brotherly unity, by declaring, that it is at once good and pleasant. It is advantageous, and it is delightful. He likens it, and its effects, for advantage and delight, to two things; first, to the precious ointment, or "holy anointing oil,"

Exod. 30. 25, made according to the directions of the Law, for anointing Aaron and his sons to the high priest's office; and secondly, to "the dew of Hermon," "that descended upon the mountains of Zion." The holy anointing oil presents an image of something precious and fragrant, and at the same time continuous, flowing from part to part, yet nowhere separate; and applied, according to God's ordinance, as the outward sign or symbol, in continuing the holy office of the priesthood. The dew which is formed on one mountain, and then exhaled, and wafted in the air to be deposited on another, suggests the thought of fertility, nourished by the mutual action of earth, and air, and water, on each other; the sun too, by its light and heat, aiding to draw up and scatter all abroad, to parts where they are wanted, the beautiful and precious drops of moisture derived from parts where they abound.

Such are the advantages, such the delights of brotherly love. It is beautiful to behold. It is pleasant to enjoy. It is fruitful to partake of. In a family it makes labour less irksome, affliction less painful. It renders every gift, talent, and possession, of each member singly, profitable and pleasurable to all. In the state, which is a family on a larger scale, the same advantages ensue on brotherly concord. No strength is wasted on strife. No superfluity is consumed in luxury. The bounty of the rich is to the poor as if they had a common purse. The rank and authority of the great is to the rest security for the common liberty. And if such ought to be our harmony of work and will in the state, how much more in the church! It is especially in reference to church unity that S. Paul lays down this rule for our guidance, that we should "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. 1. 10. Who can say what effect might be produced on unbelievers all around us, if Christians were generally to act up to the spirit of this instruction? Who can deny, that our manifold divisions, groundless as they often are, and tending, as they always must do, to bitter animosities, are among the chief things which hinder the progress of the gospel? Who can doubt that cordial religious unity would be delightful and profitable to ourselves as well as to others; and that wherever we can meet with it, we need seek no further for the place, where "the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore?" May the lovely picture of brotherly communion, set before us in this psalm, incline us to follow after religious union, with tenfold ardour of affection! And may God, by his grace, take away from amongst us, every remaining root of bitterness, and make all who are of one nation to be one church, yea, make all who are of one blood throughout the earth, to be of one united family in Christ Jesus our Lord!

*The psalmist exhorteth God's servants to bless Him.*

A Song of degrees.

1 Behold, bless ye the LORD,    2 Lift up your hands in the  
all ye servants of the LORD, sanctuary, and bless the LORD.  
which by night stand in the    3 The LORD that made heaven  
house of the LORD.                      and earth bless thee out of Zion.

### LECTURE 995.

*Of desiring to join in praising God in heaven.*

This is the last of fifteen psalms, each of which is entitled "a song of degrees." This title may be otherwise translated, a song of steps, or, a song of ascent or going up. And it was probably given to these psalms in particular, because it was the custom of the Jews to sing them as they went up to Jerusalem from all parts of Judæa, at the great yearly festivals. Some indeed have thought that these psalms derived this name from being used as the priest and people ascended the steps to go up into the temple. And it may be observed in support of this notion, that amongst the things which the queen of Sheba especially admired in the state and proceedings of Solomon, was "his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord;" 1 Kings 10. 5; meaning perhaps, a solemn procession of priests and people singing some of these songs of degrees. On the other hand there are many who suppose, that the title refers to the coming up of the people out of Babylon; an event to which many of these psalms seem appropriate, whilst others of them however are quite otherwise. So little can be known with any certainty as to the true meaning and application of this title. And so much the more is it open to us, to apply it in a figurative sense to our own profit; and to consider it as signifying to us, a song of ascent from earth to heaven; a psalm, which in unison with the rest of all these songs of Zion is suited to raise our thoughts from things below to things above.

How then is the psalm before us adapted to this purpose. How shall it be to us "a song of degrees," in the sense of lifting us up in mind and soul from things temporal to things eternal? First let us observe what are the things temporal of which it speaks. It begins with an exhortation from some of those who ministered in the temple of the Lord, addressed to the others, bidding them bless the Lord, and repeating the injunction, and charging all, whether it were their turn to wait in the Lord's house by day or by night, charging all to bless the Lord. It concludes with the reply of those who are thus charged, and who answer by praying for the blessings of the Lord on those who thus exhort them. The person thus speaking was probably one of the chief priests, or it might be the high priest himself. And the persons exhorted were those among the Levites, of whom we



read in the Book of Chronicles, that they were singers, and that "they were employed in that work day and night." 1 Chron. 9. 33. A happy life this surely must have been, to sing God's praises all day long within his temple; to take it too by turns to watch all night, and sing all night, and bless his holy name. A happy life; provided only that the praise proceeded from the heart; provided that these singers, who inherited the office, were qualified by devotedness of soul to discharge it happily and thankfully.

But this, we fear, could not always be the case. The stirring words of the psalm before us seem to prove, that even the best of men need frequent admonition to their duty. Our own experience plainly shews us, that whether it is our turn to sing God's praise with tuneful lips, or to shew it forth with holy actions day or night, our piety is apt to flag, our faith, and love, and hope, and joy, need constantly their fires fed afresh with grace from heaven, drawn down by humble supplication. And further we should probably but ill hold out against the snares of spiritual lethargy, were it not for God's ordinance of a Christian ministry, and sabbath service in our Christian temples, and many a word of exhortation, from God speaking to us in his word, if not also from our Christian brethren. And after all we all must confess, how great are the temptations to formality, both in our worship and in our other duties; how easily the settled order of our religious actions degenerates into lip service, or hand service, instead of the service of the heart.

But it is not so above. And this consideration might greatly help us towards serving God more heartily, more spiritually, whilst yet we are below. Our business on earth is to become meet for heaven. We know that they who worship there require no frequent admonition, no urgent exhortation, to glorify their Lord and God. Nay, they take it not in turns to wake and sleep, but "rest not day and night." Rev. 4. 8. For there in truth there is not day and night, but all is always light, and always glory; and all is always praise. Let us then approach as near as our present frailty will permit us, towards this happy state. Let us study to praise God continually, by doing all things according to his will, all things with a view to his glory, all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, his ever blessed Son. And especially when we praise Him with our lips, when we sing his praises in our worship, when we sing his praises, or pray for blessings at his hand, let us give our whole heart to the work we are about, let us bless Him, and beseech Him to bless us, with all our soul. Let us by faith see Him present, and hear the host of heaven celebrate his glory. And let us sing or speak, or silently adore, with zeal and fervour of affection, as if we could be glad to pass, whilst so employed, from worshipping the Lord imperfectly on earth, to take part in the perfect harmony of songs in heaven.

*The psalmist giveth reasons for praising the Lord.*

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD.
- 2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,
- 3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.
- 4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.
- 5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods.
- 6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.
- 7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures.
- 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.
- 9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
- 10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;
- 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:
- 12 And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.
- 13 Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.
- 14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.
- 15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
- 16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;
- 17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths.
- 18 They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.
- 19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:
- 20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.
- 21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

## LECTURE 996.

*The blessedness of not being idle worshippers.*

The psalmist here gives reasons for praising God, which apply to all men, though especially addressed to ministers of religion. First, God is good; next, his name is pleasant. It is pleasant to those who know that He is good. Next, God who of old chose Israel to be his people, has now in like manner chosen us. And then our conviction that we are his chosen people ought greatly to weigh with us in praising Him. Again, He is great, and we know it; He is above all gods. And we have the privilege of knowing that there is in truth no other God but only He. He is God not only in Israel, not only in one country, but in all, not only in the earth and seas, but also in the air and sky; in the heavens which we behold above us, and in those which are invisible

to our eyes. In all these places He does whatsoever He thinks fit. In all He is omnipotent; in all altogether wise and good.

But more particularly in the case of the Israelites, the Lord had for their sake smitten the first born of Egypt, besides his other signs and wonders which He wrought on Pharaoh and his subjects. Again, He gave them signal success against the kings who opposed their passage from Egypt into the land of Canaan, as well as over the Canaanites themselves. Again, He gave them the land of Canaan for their inheritance according to his promise. And here the psalmist stops in the midst of his recital of reasons for praising God, he stops in order that he may praise Him, saying: "Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations. For the Lord will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants." Yes, God is to be praised for his justice also; God is to be praised for judging his people, He is to be praised for this, even by the people whom He is to judge. And if they, of whom He seems to have repented that they were his servants, on account of their unbelief, if even they, whom He has cast off from being his chosen people, must acknowledge his justice in so doing, how much more are we bound to celebrate his praise, we whom He has chosen in their place!

The remainder of this psalm is nearly the same, word for word, with part of the hundred and fifteenth. It points out the gross folly of idol worship, and it thus leads the worshippers of the true God to dwell upon their advantage in knowing Him, and to bless his name for giving them this knowledge. This is a reason for praising God, which is quite as fitting to have weight with us, as with the house of Israel, and the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi. For the worship of false gods is still as prevalent as ever in a large portion of the world. And we enjoy in the Gospel a revelation more explicit and full, than that which the Israelites possessed, as to the dealings and attributes of the true God. And besides the practice of worshipping false gods, that of bowing down to images also still prevails; yes, and is established to a great extent amongst those who worship the Lord God Almighty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So that we have to thank God for this also, that we have been preserved from all kinds of image worship. "They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them." Not only is it wickedness to worship images, it is senseless folly to trust in them at all. Of all other kinds of foolishness, it is that for which there is most cause to fear, that multitudes by means of it are lost for ever.

God be praised, then, that we know Him as He is, and are taught to worship Him as He would be worshipped, not by help of images, but in spirit and in truth! God grant that we may worship Him as we have been taught, may praise Him, and pray to Him, and obey his will, with a just apprehension of his divine excellence, and with genuine piety in our own hearts!



*The psalmist dwelleth on God's everlasting love.*

- 1 O give thanks unto the LORD; *endureth for ever*:  
 for he is good: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy *endureth for ever*:  
 22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.  
 26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth for ever*.

## LECTURE 997.

*The supreme mercy of God in our redemption.*

It is not then altogether a new revelation, when we are told by S. John, in the New Testament, that "God is love." 1 John 5. s. This doctrine may be found in the psalm before us; wherein all God's dealings are referred to his mercy, and even his dispensations of wrath towards the enemies of his people are ascribed to his everlasting love. Nay, and this is also true of the chastisements inflicted upon Israel. It was in mercy that God visited them for their sins. And when they were brought back from their great captivity, they had good ground for saying, "Who

remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever; And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever." And we may reasonably think, that it was on this occasion that the psalm before us was composed. For thus we read in the book of Ezra, that the priests and Levites "sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." Ezra 3. 11.

There is indeed nothing in which the goodness of the Lord is manifested more signally, than in mercy rejoicing against judgment. See Jas. 2. 13. In all his works, and all his ways, his goodness plainly may be seen; but here it shines with twofold glory. And therefore the psalmist dwells chiefly on redemption, much as he has to say justly on the wonders of creation, yet still he dwells chiefly on redemption, for the proof that God is good, and that "his mercy endureth for ever." Wonderful, most wonderful is his work, wonderful for goodness as well as skill, his work in making earth, and sea, and sun, and moon, and stars. And if, on the formation of this goodly universe, "all the sons of God shouted for joy," Job 38. 7; if they that stand around the heavenly throne found herein fresh matter of rejoicing; well may we, when we behold the glorious work, and think whose work it is, join gladly in regarding it as a proof, that "his mercy endureth for ever."

But redemption, this must be the burden of our glad and thankful songs. Redemption, it was for this that the psalmist chiefly praised God. Because the Lord had brought out Israel from Egypt, "with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm," because He had overthrown their enemies by the way, and brought them safely to the land of Canaan, and because He had again delivered them out of trouble, when they, by reason of their sins, had been again captives in a foreign land, therefore must the people thankfully acknowledge, at the mention of every step and stage in this redeeming work of God, that "his mercy endureth for ever." And so also in the salvation of our souls, each part and portion of the dealings of the Lord deserves on our parts thoughts of thankfulness, and songs of praise. That in the eternal counsels of the Most High, the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, this proves that "his mercy endureth for ever." That death followed as the penalty of sin, and that yet, by the death of Christ, there should be made atonement for the sins of all, this too serves to convince us, that "his mercy endureth for ever." That God loved us when we were sinners, that in due time Christ died for the ungodly, that God has, for his sake, forgiven the sins of all that truly repent, that He not only justifies, but also sanctifies, both blots out sin, and implants holiness; both delivers from the bondage of iniquity, and gives to all who ask for it aright, the needful food of grace and godliness; for these, above all other blessings, let us "give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever."

*The psalmist lamenteth the captivity in Babylon.*

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.  
 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.  
 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.  
 4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?  
 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
- 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.  
 7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.  
 8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.  
 9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

## LECTURE 998.

*That we are liable to be ensnared by the mystic Babylon.*

The recollection of past happiness and glory in Jerusalem was one of the things which brought tears into the eyes of the Israelites, when captives in the land of Babylon. And, in the plaintive language of this psalm, they express their natural reluctance to sing "the Lord's song" in that strange country, for the entertainment of their conquerors. Lamentation was better suited to their case than singing. For singing is usually expressive of joy. And it was very likely, at the triumphal feasts of the Assyrians, that they called upon their Jewish captives, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." It was in this spirit of cruel triumph that the lords of the Philistines treated Samson, when they had him in bonds as their prisoner. "It came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport." Judg. 16. 25. It is in this spirit that the evil often scoff at the misfortunes of the good; and that they also whose cause is right are tempted, if they succeed, to triumph over those whose conduct has been wrong. Let us, therefore, take warning, and henceforth be upon our guard against triumphing in this proud and cruel temper. Let us feel for the worst of men in their calamities. And much more for the best let us feel deeply; let us respect their sorrows; let us sympathize in their afflictions, and desire to rejoice with them in their renewed rejoicing.

The captive Israelites felt that thus to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, would imply forgetfulness of their native country, and of all the blessings which in their minds were connected with the remembrance of Jerusalem. And therefore, they thus express their resolute refusal: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember



thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." We are not without occasions on which we ought to practise a like resolution. The city which once flourished by the streams of Babel has indeed been long ago made a heap of ruins. But there is a mystical Babylon, which even now is flourishing, even now is delighting to spoil and triumph over the true people of God. And though we have no part or lot in the city which still stands upon mount Zion here below, there is a "Jerusalem which is above," and "which is the mother of us all." Gal. 4. 26. And it is better to be exiles, devotedly attached to this our heavenly home, than to share the glory of that worldly empire, which is described in the book of Revelation, as "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." Rev. 17. 5.

The woman, on whose forehead this dreadful title was written, is generally supposed to mean that spiritual apostasy and tyranny which flourishes at its height in the idolatrous and despotic church of Rome. But it is expressly testified of this mystic woman, that "all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Rev. 18. 3. We need therefore to bear in mind, that whilst we possess a reformed faith, and are members of a reformed church, we are still beset with the Babylonish legions, and are liable, unless we watch diligently, and pray fervently against it, to be enslaved by the Babylonish power. We are under frequent temptation to convey with us into the church the spirit of the world; to practise the idolatry of worldly power, wealth, and wisdom; and to make common cause with those, who under colour of religious principle, indulge in cruelty, wrath, malice, and all uncharitableness. Wherever this spirit and these practices prevail, there the mystic Babylon has footing. Wherever superstition takes place of piety, whilst luxury, selfishness, and the pride of life, supplant selfdenial, humility, and charity, wherever practical ungodliness presumes to lift its shameless front, and persecutes, either unto death, or with mockery and scorn, the saints and martyrs of the Lord Jesus; thither we may justly apprehend that the avenging arm of God will reach, and there the awful sentence will be executed, "Babylon the great is fallen." Rev. 18. 2. Oh, let us then take heed to our ways, that we be not partakers of her plagues. The Edomites, who being nigh of kin to the Israelites, yet joined in the hostility against them, were not to be forgotten in the day of vengeance of the Lord. What are these but worldly minded professors of Christianity? And how dreadful must be the end awaiting such as these, how fierce the fire of the wrath of God, against those who grossly pervert his truth, and persecute or corrupt his people, when He proclaims, as in this psalm, a blessing unto them that destroyed Babylon of old; and encourages his people to a holy triumph in the fall of Babylon that now is, saying: "Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her!" Rev. 18. 20.

*David declares and foretells the praise of God.**1. Psalm of David.*

I will praise thee with my waves of the LORD: for great  
 will I praise thee before the great is the glory of the LORD.  
 will I sing praise unto thee. Though the LORD be high,  
 yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth  
 afar off.  
 Though I walk in the midst  
 of trouble, thou wilt revive me:  
 thou shalt stretch forth thine  
 hand against the wrath of mine  
 enemies, and thy right hand  
 shall save me.  
 The LORD will perfect that  
 which concerneth me: thy mer-  
 cy, O LORD, endureth for ever:  
 forsake not the works of thine  
 hands: they shall sing in the  
 own hands.

## LECTURE 999.

*The Gospel promotes genuine civil liberty.*

When David declares to Jehovah, "before the gods will I sing praise unto thee," it is probable that he refers to the judges who bore rule in the land, and perhaps generally to judges, and rulers, and kings in all countries. For thus the name of "gods" is applied to rulers in the eighty second psalm: "I have said, ye are gods: and all of you are children of the most high. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." Ps. 82. 6, 7. From which passage our Lord reasoned with the Jews, that they ought not to take umbrage at his saying, "I am the Son of God." John 10. 36. And his reasoning implies, that the name of "gods" is sometimes given in the Jewish Scriptures to those who were no more than men. David may therefore be understood as declaring, that he would praise the Lord God Almighty, even in the presence of those who were so highly exalted among men, that it was not uncommon to speak of them as gods, and to do homage to their persons as if they were divine. And after stating the grounds of his praising God, he goes on to declare his conviction, that the great ones of the earth, instead of taking offence at hearing some one extolled above themselves, would join in the praise of God. "All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth."

Here there seems to be implied a censure of that arrogancy in kings, which true religion condemns in all men, and which it will not allow in monarchs any more than in their subjects. And this perhaps may be the reason of David's here insisting on God's love towards the lowly, and on his aversion to the proud: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." And hence we may infer the error of



that mean servility, on the part of subjects towards them that bear rule, which makes them treat their rulers as their gods, rather than as men, and brethren, and fellow creatures. Our respect towards all that are over us and above us ought to be sincere and deep in the heart. It ought to be manifested in a respectful outward demeanour. But we ought never to confound the respect which is due to man with the reverence which is due to God. We ought never to forget the honour stamped upon ourselves, by our having been adopted children of God through Christ; whom it would therefore ill become to flatter the pride of others by abject servility of manner. Great is the improvement which the Gospel has wrought amongst mankind in this important point. And greatly is the Gospel misunderstood by those, who charge it with upholding arrogancy in the prince, or promoting a slavish spirit in the people. On the contrary, it represents both rulers and their subjects, as chargeable with the same sinfulness, as in need of the same redemption, as now suppliants at the same throne of grace, and as hereafter to stand at the same judgment seat of Christ. And whilst it insists upon the obedience of the people to their kings, this is as unto the ordinance of God; whose laws are supreme over all; and whose service makes all men not indeed unruly, riotous, and lawless, but really and truly free.

But let us not fail to observe on what grounds it is that David supposes kings will humbly join with him in praising God; on what grounds David was himself resolved to celebrate God's praise. It was, he says, "for thy loving kindness and truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." God had magnified his word, by fulfilling, and more than fulfilling his promises. "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." The tidings of these things would weigh with others, as with David, to believe, and praise. And the experience of that which God had done wrought in David a persuasion, that He would do yet more for him; would revive him when in the midst of trouble; would save him from the wrath of his enemies; and would perfect that work of mercy which had been begun in him, even saving him everlastingly. These are tidings which concern all kings as well as David, all people as well as kings; the tidings of God's truth and loving kindness, the tidings of his perfecting his work of mercy in the salvation of sinners. The more largely these tidings are diffused, and the more heartily they are believed, both kings and people will more thoroughly agree in seeking, not their own greatness, power, prerogative, or privilege, but chiefly "the glory of the Lord." May Christian rulers and Christian people set herein an example to all others, each discharging the duties of their station as they that must give account to God, and recommending the Gospel to the heathens, by shewing how it yields not only in private and domestic life, but also in all civil and political relationships, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness!" Heb. 12. 11.



*David setteth forth the omniscience of God.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

- 1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.  
 2 Thou knowest my downsit-  
 ing and mine uprising, thou un-  
 derstandest my thought afar off.  
 3 Thou compassest my path  
 and my lying down, and art ac-  
 quainted *with* all my ways.  
 4 For *there is* not a word in  
 my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD,  
 thou knowest it altogether.  
 5 Thou hast beset me behind  
 and before, and laid thine hand  
 upon me.  
 6 *Such* knowledge *is* too won-  
 derful for me; it is high, I can-  
 not *attain* unto it.  
 7 Whither shall I go from thy  
 spirit? or whither shall I flee  
 from thy presence?  
 8 If I ascend up into heaven,  
 thou *art* there: if I make my  
 bed in hell, behold, thou *art*  
*there*.  
 9 *If* I take the wings of the  
 morning, *and* dwell in the ut-  
 termost parts of the sea;  
 10 Even there shall thy hand  
 lead me, and thy right hand  
 shall hold me.  
 11 If I say, Surely the dark-  
 ness shall cover me; even the  
 night shall be light about me.  
 12 Yea, the darkness hideth  
 not from thee; but the night  
 shineth as the day: the dark-  
 ness and the light *are* both a-  
 like *to thee*.  
 13 For thou hast possessed my  
 reins: thou hast covered me in  
 my mother's womb.
- 14 I will praise thee; for I  
 am fearfully *and* wonderfully  
 made: marvellous *are* thy  
 works; and *that* my soul know-  
 eth right well.  
 15 My substance was not hid  
 from thee, when I was made in  
 secret, *and* curiously wrought  
 in the lowest parts of the earth.  
 16 Thine eyes did see my sub-  
 stance, yet being imperfect; and  
 in thy book all *my members*  
 were written, *which* in continu-  
 ance were fashioned, when *as*  
*yet there was* none of them.  
 17 How precious also are thy  
 thoughts unto me, O God! how  
 great is the sum of them!  
 18 *If* I should count them,  
 they are more in number than  
 the sand: when I awake, I am  
 still with thee.  
 19 Surely thou wilt slay the  
 wicked, O God: depart from  
 me therefore, ye bloody men.  
 20 For they speak against thee  
 wickedly, *and* thine enemies  
 take *thy name* in vain.  
 21 Do not I hate them, O  
 LORD, that hate thee? and am  
 not I grieved with those that  
 rise up against thee?  
 22 I hate them with perfect  
 hatred: I count them mine  
 enemies.  
 23 Search me, O God, and  
 know my heart: try me, and  
 know my thoughts:  
 24 And see if *there be any*  
 wicked way in me, and lead  
 me in the way everlasting.

## LECTURE 1000.

*The necessity of loving God unfeignedly.*

In this psalm we have a most impressive statement of a truth, which is acknowledged by every one, but which is felt as it ought to be by few. Almighty God is ever present, and ever privy to *the thoughts* of our hearts. Distance is no distance with Him.

Neither any place that we can be in, nor any to which we can conceive ourselves removed, is out of the reach of his power, or out of the sight of his all seeing eye. When we lie down, and when we rise up, when we go forth, and when we rest at home, God knows our ways, and hears our words, and understands our thoughts. Before, behind, and all around us, his hand is nigh to help, his Spirit present to behold, in a manner too wonderful for us to understand. So would it be if we could now ascend into heaven; there we should see Him reigning in glory. Or if we were to make our bed in hell, whether "hell" here mean the grave, or the place of punishment, still we should find ourselves no further from escaping the ever present power of Almighty God. Though we could fly swift as dawning light, or vanish with the setting sun beneath the western sea, the speed of God would overmatch our flight; or rather, whithersoever we could go, He is there already. There He is, and there He sees; alike in light, or darkness. The darkness and the light are both alike to God. He sees alike in both. He works alike in both. Witness the workmanship of our own selves, the secret fashioning of our several limbs, the curious texture of our several parts, all made to grow together in the dark place of their formation, even as seeds that are unfolded into plants beneath the surface of the earth; and there wrought into a body so beautifully fitted in all its parts for all their offices, that when we study its construction in the full light of day, and with the best help of science, we tremble to think of the presence of our Maker; we tremble, admire, and adore.

And can we suppose that He who made us takes no note of us? Can we doubt that He will bring the wicked to the bar of judgment for all the evil deeds they do? No; if our members are written in his book, much more our actions. If our substance, the first element of our bodies, be not hid from God, much less our thoughts and feelings, our faith or faithlessness, our devout affection, or indifference to Himself. Far be it then from us that God should see in us a heart of unbelief, or a fellow feeling with unbelievers! Far be it from us not to abhor evil, not to hate that which God hates, not to shrink with unfeigned aversion from them that are the enemies of God! This token of our loving Him sincerely we must not fail to let Him see within us. He can shew us how to feel aversion to his enemies consistently with charity to all mankind. He can detect us instantly, if under pretence of charity to sinners we cherish a favourable disposition towards sin. Let it then be our constant aim to have the heart right with God. Let us beseech Him to make us thoroughly sincere in faith and love. Let us be glad to think that He is always privy to our thoughts; highly prizing his presence and inspection, and delighting to reflect, that not only when we wake up from sleep, but also when we shall arise from the dead, we are and shall "ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4. 17.

*David prayeth, and trusteth in the help of God.*

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

- 1 Deliver me, O LORD, from day of battle.  
the evil man : preserve me from the violent man ;
- 2 Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart ; continually are they gathered together *for* war.
- 3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent ; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.
- 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked ; preserve me from the violent man ; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.
- 5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords ; they have spread a net by the wayside ; they have set gins for me. Selah.
- 6 I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God : hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
- 7 O God the LORD, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the
- 8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked : further not his wicked device ; *lest* they exalt themselves. Selah.
- 9 *As for* the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
- 10 Let burning coals fall upon them : let them be cast into the fire ; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
- 11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth : evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.
- 12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, *and* the right of the poor.
- 13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name ; the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

## LECTURE 1001.

*Of being more in earnest in our faith.*

There were many occasions when David might well pray to be delivered from the evil man, and preserved from the violent man. Very frequently were his enemies gathered together for war. And not only was he exposed to much risk from open violence, he encountered also much harm from slander, and much danger from secret subtlety. In all these points we may view his life as a figure of that which befel our Saviour Christ, and of that also which befalls the Christian church. And there are few that are Christians indeed, who do not experience in their own lives some at least of the troubles here set forth, arising from the violence, falsehood, or subtlety, of evil men. But which are they amongst us, who when they are in jeopardy, resort immediately to prayer, as to the first and the chief thing that they have to do for safety? Which of us can truly say with David, in such an emergency, "I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God : hear the voice of my supplications, O God?"

Even they who do resort to prayer, and who can therefore truly say that they resort to it, are apt to look upon it more as a



form than as a powerful reality; are apt to live as much in fear of their slanderers and persecutors, as if there were no promise that prayer shall be heard. But David at the end of his petitions teaches us to rise up from praying with a good courage, and in a full persuasion that our prayers have been favourably heard. "I know," he says, "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence." He is confident that his prayer is heard. He is confident that it will be effectually granted. He is confident that the righteous will have cause to give thanks to God, for the blessings in behalf of which they pray. He speaks as one who might have heard the words written long afterwards by S. John, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit: "this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." 1 John 5. 14, 15.

This confidence is the fruit of faith. And in praying, one of the first prayers, which we need to use is this, "Lord, increase our faith." Luke 17. 5. And this principle applies not only to our praying, but to every duty we have to do, to every affection which we ought to feel. Nothing would do more to make us prosper in our spiritual work, nothing would weigh more with unbelievers to move their hearts towards belief, nothing would tend more largely to glorify God our Saviour, than for us to act and speak, and prove that we really think and feel, as if the things which we profess to believe are real. This manner of behaviour might indeed be mistaken by some for the loud profession of the hypocrite. And the prevalence of hypocritical profession has added greatly to the difficulty of living at once soberly and seriously, inoffensively and religiously. But perhaps we should not shrink so sensitively from the risk of being esteemed hypocrites, if we were not conscious that we are in some degree guilty of hypocrisy. If we had faith, real lively faith, at all proportionate to the things which we believe, we should not be restrained, by any fear of being misunderstood, from constantly speaking of God as first and foremost in our thoughts, and from continually appealing to his presence and his help as the chief ground of our hope of safety. No fear of reproach would prevent us from being something more like the men we ought to be, than most of us are. Not only would our prayers be more frequent and more fervent, but after praying we should feel, speak, and act, as if persuaded that our petitions had been heard. And whatsoever enemies were besetting us, either by force or fraud, we should have no hesitation before any man in referring to Almighty God, as the ever present Friend, Helper, and Protector, who we know will mightily deliver us.

*David prayeth to be preserved from evil practices.*

A Psalm of David.

1 LORD, I cry unto thee: prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.  
make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense; and the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.  
6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.  
7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth.

5 Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my  
8 But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.  
9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.  
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

## LECTURE 1002.

*Praying to be delivered from the power of temptation.*

There is great uncertainty as to the occasion on which this psalm was written. And there are some expressions in it, which cannot be clearly explained without our knowing what event the psalm refers to. Who were the righteous whom David would have to smite him, what judges were to be overthrown in stony places, where were they were that are spoken of as being scattered at the grave's mouth, these are matters on which it seems impossible to arrive at certainty, unless we were to know more than we do of the history of David and of Israel. And we might reasonably expect to find many such cases in the psalms, as we have of this we do. We might expect to find many passages in the psalms of difficult interpretation, by reason of our not knowing to what event they refer: because in truth we know very many the other events amongst the many things likely to be mentioned either directly or indirectly, in such a book as the Book of Psalms. The matter is that we can explain so many of the historical allusions as we can, by reference to the historical books. And we ought to thank God for thus marvelously adapting one part of his inspired word for the interpretation of another part. And when we find ourselves at a loss for want of further information, we ought to be content to know in part, or to have no

more than a mere opinion, or probable conjecture, the best which the case admits of, as to the meaning of that which we are reading.

Perhaps the best conjecture, as to the probable meaning of the psalm before us, is as follows: that it was written by David, upon his resolving to take refuge with Achish, king of Gath, after he had spared Saul's life on two occasions, but yet could not feel his own life safe, as long as he was within Saul's reach. See 1 Sam. 26. Upon this occasion he here prays that his heartfelt cries to God, when in a foreign land, might be equivalent to sacrifice duly offered at the tabernacle. He petitions to be preserved from the evil practices of idolatry in the land of his exile. He declares he had rather be reproved by the righteous, than have friendly fellowship with the wicked. He foretels that they who then ruled in Israel would be overthrown, and that the people would then give heed to his words; though for the present his friends and followers were exposed to persecution and death; meaning especially the slaughter of the priests by the hand of Doeg the Edomite. See 1 Sam. 22. 18. And having made mention of his troubles, and of the malice of his enemies, he declares that his trust is in the Lord God, prays God not to leave his soul destitute, but to keep him from the snares of the workers of iniquity, and to let them fall into their own net.

It is in harmony with this interpretation, that David before fleeing to Gath had said of those who drove him into exile, "they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods." 1 Sam. 26. 19. This at least proves that he felt he should run some risk of serving other gods when in another country. And though under such circumstances, he might probably have done better to stay at all hazards in the land of Israel, he did well to pray that God would preserve him from the temptation to idol worship, from the risk of his partaking in idol feasts. Our best way is to avoid as far as possible every situation, where we are likely to be tempted to transgress. And accordingly our Lord teaches us to pray to God, "Lead us not into temptation." "But," He adds, "deliver us from evil." Matt. 6. 13. For we must sometimes be exposed to temptation. And though we may have been thrown in the way of it by error of our own judgment, or through our own want of faith and fortitude, we are still privileged, as we learn from the psalm before us, to ask God to help and save us! Be graciously pleased, O Lord, to keep us unpolluted by the manifold kinds of idol worship which prevail even in our Christian country. From covetousness, from selfishness, from sensuality, from inordinate affection, from pride, from vain glory, good Lord, deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord!



*David pointeth out his comfort when in trouble.*

Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave.

1 I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4 I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me: re-

fuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living.

6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

## LECTURE 1003.

*The comfort of praying for the help of God.*

The title states that this is a prayer of David "when he was in the cave." This probably means when he was in the cave of Adullam, in which he took refuge from the persecution of Saul. Here "his brethren and all his father's house" took refuge with him. And hither there resorted unto him "about four hundred men," of such as were "in distress," and "in debt," and "discontented." 1 Sam. 22. 1, 2. This was indeed very low for David to be brought, David who not long before had slain Goliath of Gath, who had the king's daughter for his wife, and who had been himself anointed as the future king of Israel. But David was only one amongst many, of whom we read in the epistle to the Hebrews, that they "wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. 11. 38. And if his low estate seemed so much the lower by contrast with the honour which was his due, this made him all the more fit to be a type of Him, who humbled Himself from the glory of heaven to the sufferings of earth, and whose testimony concerning his own destitute condition is this, "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matt. 8. 20.

The fact that Christ was truly man is most important to be borne in view, when we contemplate the humiliation of Him, whom we believe to be also truly God. For this prevents us from forming unworthy notions of the divine majesty, or conceiving thoughts of God inconsistent with his eternal power and Godhead. And it might be for this reason that Christ so frequently spake of Himself by the name of the Son of man, a name no where applied to Him by the writers of the New Testament, except when they are recording his own words. It became them, as it also becomes us, to speak of our blessed Lord as the **overlusting Son of the Father, the Saviour of the world, Jesus**

Christ. It became Him to speak of Himself as the Son of man, and to let his cries and tears and earnest supplications be witnessed and recorded by his disciples, as they had been also foretold by the prophets, and had been foreshewn in the history of those who were types of Him that was to come. For so might the depth of his humiliation be best understood, and most thankfully acknowledged. And so might we be put in remembrance, that it was as man that He suffered these grievous indignities, whilst it was as God that He made atonement for the sins of all mankind.

Regarding then the words before us as prophetic of our blessed Lord's strong cries and supplications, let us also view them as a pattern of the kind of prayer we ought to have recourse to, when overtaken by trouble, or beset with persecution. "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication." It is a good thing to do as David says he did, to use the voice aloud in prayer. It helps to fix our own attention. It enables us to make our petitions distinct, particular, and full. We are less likely to wander in our thoughts, than when we pray only in thought and desire, without uttering any words with the lips. And yet the chief thing of all in prayer is to long with the heart. And whilst we pray aloud, and thus stir up our attention, and give more fervour to our supplications, we must remember that God hears the utterance of the heart; we must pour out our complaint, and shew our trouble, as before One from whom nothing is hid.

But of whom have we to complain? And what troubles are those which we have to shew before the Lord? Do we not for the most part dwell at ease? Is it not the study of most men to enjoy life as far as possible without drawback of unhappiness? Certainly this is the case with many. And if they did but aim at true happiness, it would be well if it were the case with all. But if we aim at the happiness of a religious course of life, we must not shut our eyes to the dangers which beset us, and the troubles which await us. There are enemies around us, who will not suffer us, if they can help it, to dwell in peace and safety. And under the apprehension of their malice, and the experience of their power, it cannot be but that sometimes our spirit will be overwhelmed within us. In such seasons let it be our comfort to think, that God knows our path. Let it be our delight to say to Him, "Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." Let us cry aloud to Him who hears in secret, and who has promised to attend unto our cry. Our enemies may be stronger than we; but much more is God stronger than they. They deal with us deceitfully and cruelly. But much more will He deal bountifully. Our souls will by Him be brought out of prison. Our mourning will be turned into joy. And for our strong cries of pain and supplication, we shall have songs of endless praise.

*David pleadeth earnestly for mercy and grace.*

A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, my spirit faileth : hide not thy give ear to my supplications : face from me, lest I be like unto in thy faithfulness answer me, them that go down into the pit, and in thy righteousness.

2 And enter not into judgment kindness in the morning ; for with thy servant : for in thee do I trust : cause me to sight shall no man living be know the way wherein I should justified.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted to thee.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies : I flee unto thee to hide me.

4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me ; my heart within me is desolate.

5 I remember the days of old ; I meditate on all thy works ; I muse on the work of thy hands.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee : my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD : I *am* thy servant.

## LECTURE 1004.

*Of fervency in our prayers to God.*

To the devout Israelite of old this psalm must have supplied a wholesome check against the risk of trusting in his own righteousness. For it implies that which is expressly taught in the New Testament, namely, that by the works of the Law no man could be justified in the sight of God. See Rom. 3. 20. Gal. 2. 16. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Thus it was that David prayed to God. Thus it was that he regarded his own works, his own life; and not only his own, in which he had at least one most grievous and gross offence to reflect upon, but also the life of the most irreproachable of mankind that could be found, "in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Thus it was that the Holy Spirit testified of the sinfulness of man, taught the impossibility of man's justifying himself, and prepared the way for bringing in a better hope, for establishing a better righteousness, and for manifesting in Jesus Christ, how God is at once just, and yet the Justifier of sinners, provided they are repentant and believing.

There appears to have been a close connexion in the mind of



David between this conviction of his own inability to justify himself, and the endeavour to repent and turn to God. He did not argue, as some do, that because he could not by any means render himself fit to stand in the judgment before God, therefore it was in vain to do any thing. At least he could pray. He could beseech God to hear his prayer. He could appeal to God's faithfulness and righteousness, however much he distrusted his own. He could spread out all his grief before the Lord, stating how the enemy of his soul first prevailed on him to sin, and then would tempt him to despair, how his spirit was overwhelmed, and his heart desolate, and how his present dejection was embittered by the remembrance of God's past loving kindnesses. And then as he called to mind God's mercy of old, he could begin to hope, and long, and pray for it, with an earnestness of desire, and eagerness to obtain, which he compared with the stretching forth of his hands, or with the thirst of a parched land for needful rain. What a pattern for us in our desires after God! What a reproof to the coldness of our ordinary devotions! What an argument to confute those amongst us, who disapprove of all warmth of feeling, and fervour of expression, in our acts of worship towards God!

Far then be from us a cold and formal method of devotion! Far be it from us to kneel down to pray without any emotion of soul, as if our sins were no burden to us, and our pardon no object to us; as if God were not infinitely great, holy, and good, and as if we were not infinitely beholden to Him, for being willing to hear and to forgive sinners so worthless as we are in his sight! Seriousness becomes us, and a grave demeanour, solemnity of language, and soberness of mind. But with these we must unite the most deep earnestness, the most urgent importunity. We must, with David, beg to be heard "speedily," declare that our "spirit faileth," and feel it failing whensoever we feel that God's face is hidden from us. We must specify in our prayer the things we are in need of one by one; and they must be chiefly such as these for which David prays, the sense of God's loving kindness, the knowledge of his way, deliverance from our spiritual enemies, the power to do God's will, the guidance of his hand unto a better country, that is, a heavenly one, and the quickening power of his Spirit, not only to make us lead a new life now, but to raise us up at the last day, and then bring us safe out of all our trouble, and destroy our enemies for evermore. For things like these let us pray earnestly, professing, as David does, and professing with sincerity, that we trust in God, that we lift up our souls unto Him, that we flee unto Him, to hide us, and that we are his devoted servants. For things like these let us pray, in a spirit such as these professions indicate, and we shall then not fail to pray earnestly, to feel deeply, to long ardently, and at the same time to express ourselves reverently.

*David blesseth God, and declareth the happiness of God's people.*

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Blessed *be* the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, *and* my fingers to fight:

2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and *he* in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

3 LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

4 Man is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.

5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

7 Send thine hand from above: rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.

9 I will sing a new song unto

thee, O God: upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

10 *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:

12 That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth; *that* our daughters *may be* as corner stones, polished *after* the similitude of a palace:

13 *That* our garners *may be* full, affording all manner of store: *that* our sheep *may bring* forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

14 *That* our oxen *may be* strong to labour; *that there be* no breaking in, nor going out; *that there be* no complaining in our streets.

15 Happy *is that* people, that *is* in such a case: *yea*, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

#### LECTURE 1005.

*The effect of being sanctioned and blessed by God.*

How great is the difference between that which God approves, sanctions, or commands, and the very same thing when forbidden by Him! What can be more opposite to humanity and love than the practices of war! What can be more evident than that when God commissioned David to destroy his enemies, then warfare was a duty, and David was bound in duty to bless God for teaching his hands to war and his fingers to fight. And then there was nothing inconsistent in praising God under figures of speech taken from the circumstances of warfare, and addressing Him not only as "my goodness," but also as "my fortress, my high tower, and my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I



trust; who subdueth my people under me." In like manner it is the sanction and authority of God that justifies and sanctifies such words in David's prayer as these, "bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them."

But is it not most marvellous, that God should condescend to make this use of sinful men, and commission them to execute his judgments on each other? Is it not a striking method of manifesting to us all his hatred against sin, when in his word He sets forth men made of the same frail sinful nature as ourselves in the character of mighty conquerors, prevailing in his name, and by the power of his arm, over those who were the enemies of Him and his truth? Surely we may well tremble at the thought of sinning against Him, when we see how readily our fellow-creatures may be made the means of our chastisement, when we find that even such deeds as those of war can be justified, such words as these of imprecation can be sanctified, if applied under the authority and inspiration of God, to the punishment of evil doers.

The commandment of God may make it right for man to do that which otherwise in man would be wrong. So also the blessing of God makes it safe and desirable for man to enjoy that which would otherwise be dangerous to his stedfast continuance in faith, and hope, and love. Worldly prosperity, worldly abundance, these things often minister the severest trial to the faithfulness of the soul. To have a flourishing family, an increasing property, plenty, and peace in which to enjoy it, this is apt to make men set up their rest on earth. And when the like prosperity pervades a whole nation, there is no small risk of that nation forgetting God in the midst of its abundance. But if God be not forgotten, if He be still honoured and acknowledged as God, trusted in and loved as God, both by rich and poor, then will He be loved all the more for this his great bounty; then will plenty and prosperity benefit both soul and body, both the nation as a nation, and each Christian singly in his own case. All depends upon having the Lord for our God. Do we love Him with all our hearts, and stedfastly purpose to do his will? This makes all the difference in the effect which worldly prosperity is likely to produce on us. Awful is the sight of great wealth and great success, falling to the lot of a man that is ungodly. Awful is the thought that such an one has received his good things here, and must ever after be tormented. But when we see abundance enjoyed with thankfulness, as the gift of God, and know that every blessing which He gives is used with a view to glorify the Giver, then we can say, happy is the man, or happy the people either, "that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."



*David praiseth God for his greatness and his goodness.*

David's Psalm of praise.

1 I will extol thee, my God,  
O sing: and I will bless thy  
name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee;  
and I will praise thy name for  
ever and ever.

3 Great is the LORD, and  
greatly to be praised: and his  
greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall praise  
thy works to another, and shall  
declare thy mighty acts.

5 I will speak of the glorious  
honour of thy majesty, and of  
thy wondrous works.

6 And men shall speak of the  
might of thy terrible acts: and  
I will declare thy greatness.

7 They shall abundantly ut-  
ter the memory of thy great  
goodness, and shall sing of thy  
righteousness.

8 The LORD is gracious, and  
full of compassion: slow to an-  
ger, and of great mercy.

9 The LORD is good to all:  
and his tender mercies are over  
all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise  
thee, O LORD: and thy saints  
shall bless thee.

11 They shall speak of the glo-  
ry of thy kingdom, and talk of  
thy power:

12 To make known to the sons  
of men his mighty acts, and the  
glorious majesty of his king-  
dom.

13 Thy kingdom is an ever-  
lasting kingdom, and thy domi-  
nion endureth throughout all  
generations.

14 The LORD upholdeth all  
that fall, and raiseth up all  
those that be bowed down.

15 The eyes of all wait upon  
thee; and thou givest them  
their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand,  
and satisfiest the desire of every  
living thing.

17 The LORD is righteous in  
all his ways, and holy in all his  
works.

18 The LORD is nigh unto all  
them that call upon him, to all  
that call upon him in truth.

19 He will fulfil the desire of  
them that fear him: he also  
will hear their cry, and will  
save them.

20 The LORD preserveth all  
them that love him: but all  
the wicked will he destroy.

21 My mouth shall speak the  
praise of the LORD: and let all  
flesh bless his holy name for  
ever and ever.

## LECTURE 1006.

*The praises of God set forth.*

In one and the same breath David declares that He will praise God, and begins to celebrate his praise. Let us endeavour to do as he has done before us. Let us resolve that we will extol our God and heavenly King, and let us straightway begin to do so in our hearts, with thoughts such as these that David sets before us. First, God is great, unsearchably great, great in his works, great in his dealings with mankind. And men of every generation have need to tell of Him, how marvellous his greatness is, how

awful his divine majesty. Next, God is gracious as well as great. Whilst his greatness constrains us to be reverent, his goodness inclines and emboldens us to love. Compassion is that of which He is full; anger that to which He is slow. And not only his mercies, but "his tender mercies are over all his works." And of all his mercies the most remarkable by far is the mercy He has shewn in the redemption of mankind by Christ Jesus. Above all then let his saints declare his praise. Whilst all his other works unite to celebrate his goodness, above all let those whom He has redeemed most largely glorify his name. Thee will we praise, O Lord, and magnify thy mercy to mankind. Great is thy power, and glorious thy kingdom; and fain would we have all men know the greatness and the glory of thy divine majesty. Thy throne is for ever and ever. Thou art King from everlasting, and world without end. Thou liftest up them that fall, Thou dost uphold the weak from falling. And then, Lord, how widely does thy care extend, even to thy universal family; all waiting on Thee for the supply of their wants, and all by Thee supplied! Thou too art righteous in all thy ways, a thing almost inconceivable by us, righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. And infinitely as thy power surpasses ours, yea, and leaves far behind the utmost stretch of our imagination, still more are thy righteousness and holiness both pure and perfect, to a degree which no language of ours can describe, nor any thought of our evil hearts can apprehend. And yet dost thou vouchsafe to have regard to man. Thou shewest Thyself nigh to them that call on Thee in truth. Let them but reverently fear Thee, and Thou wilt fulfil their desire, hear their cry, and save their souls. Yes, Thou dost preserve all them that love Thee, Thou makest all things work together for their good. Holy as Thou art, Thou hast compassion on our infirmities, and blottest out our transgressions. Surely as thy holiness will be manifested in the destruction of the ungodly, it yet allows Thee to pardon them that repent. And we, sinners as we have been, and still are, no sooner turn to Thee with true contrition, and lively faith, than Thou art heard to say, in the gracious words of thy ever blessed Son, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. 9. 2. For these things then, O Lord, our lips shall speak thy praise. For these things it shall be the desire of our hearts that all flesh may bless thy holy name for ever and ever.

*The psalmist's intention is to praise God perpetually.*

I praise thee, O Lord, I praise thee for ever:  
 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:  
 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:  
 The LORD preserveth the strangers: he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.  
 The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

## LECTURE 1007.

*The attributes of God are unchangeable.*

THOUGH it is certain that the New Testament, as compared with the Old, is "a better testament," Heb. 7. 22, yet are there many things in the Old Testament which may well put to shame the practice of those who live under the New. And especially does the Book of Psalms convince us of sin, and prove us guilty of covetousness in devotion, when we consider how full it is of praise, how largely it teaches us to praise God; and when we reflect on our own practice, and find how little we think of praising Him, how much more apt we are to pray for his help, than to praise Him for his goodness. "Praise ye the Lord;" thus the psalmist exhorts others to the work of praise. "Praise the Lord, O my soul;" thus he stirs up himself. "While I live will I praise the Lord;" thus he expresses his own steadfast purpose; and thus again, "I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." Who then ought to be content, as many are, with merely hearing others sing God's praise? What Christian should forbear to take an active part, as far as he is able, in this delightful work? Who that duly feels, how much there is for which to praise the Lord in the glad tidings of the Gospel, would let himself be surpassed by any Israelite of old, in the frequency or fervency of his songs of praise?

Deliverance from danger, protection, safety, these are the things which the psalmist appears to have had especially in view, in the praises and thanksgivings now before us. He declares the *vanity* of trusting in man, even in the most powerful and exalted of the children of men, in order to extol more highly by the



contrast the security of trusting in the Lord. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Such is the vanity of man's help; such the folly of relying on it. Even supposing we were not liable to suffer by the fickleness and deceitfulness of our fellow creatures, even if we could reasonably depend upon their constancy, and if their power were equal to the help that we require, still death may at any moment lay them low; the friends on whom we rely may be taken from us, and thus all their thoughts perish, all their intentions of helping us, all their plans for helping us, as well as ours for profiting by their help, come to an end suddenly and irrevocably. How great then is the folly of those whose trust is in their fellow creatures! How "happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God!"

For observe the difference. God is He "which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever." There can be no limit to the power of Him, who created all things. There can be no inconstancy in Him, whose truth, like Himself, is everlasting. Man dies; but God is still alive. Man's thoughts perish; but the purposes of God endure eternally and effectually. Not only long after man has breathed his last, but also after the world in which man lives shall have ceased to be, God lives, and has lived, and will live, from eternity to eternity. His truth never fails. Of his goodness there is no end. He is always able, always willing, to protect the oppressed, to supply the wants of the destitute, to give liberty to the captives, and the opening of the eyes to the blind, to raise up the fallen, to shew favour to the righteous, to preserve the strangers, to succour the widow and the fatherless; and at the same time to confound and discomfit the ways and plots and doings of the wicked. These attributes of God are unchangeable. There is no end thereof. There is no variation therein. His dealings may be manifold. But His mind is one. His dealings with mankind, under every possible variety of circumstances, prove Him to be always great, and always good, always just, and always merciful, always abhorring iniquity, always bringing good out of evil, always overcoming evil with good, always willing rather to forgive sinners than to destroy them in their sins, always ready to forgive sinners who repent, and always striving to bring them to repentance. Such is the God who reigned in Zion aforetime; yea, who reigns for ever in the spiritual Zion, unto all generations of the spiritual Israel. "Praise ye the Lord." Praise Him for this his eternal truth. Praise Him ye people whom He has redeemed. Praise Him all ye who believe that He has redeemed you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The psalmist calleth on Zion to praise God.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Praise ye the LORD: for <i>it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.</i>   | 11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.                                     |
| 2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.                                     | 12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.  |
| 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.  | 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.                            |
| 4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by <i>their</i> names.                                      | 14 He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.                                       |
| 5 Great <i>is</i> our LORD, and of great power: his understanding <i>is</i> infinite.                                 | 15 He sendeth forth his commandment <i>upon</i> earth: his word runneth very swiftly.                                   |
| 6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.   | 16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.  |
| 7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:                                       | 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?  |
| 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. | 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, <i>and</i> the waters flow.                  |
| 9 He giveth to the beast his food, <i>and</i> to the young ravens which cry.  | 19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.  |
| 10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.                       | 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: <i>and as for his</i> judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD. |

## LECTURE 1008.

*The powerful and sure influence of God's grace.*

Strong are the reasons for praising God urged at the commencement of this psalm; "it is good," "it is pleasant," and it "is comely." And profitable to us, as patterns for us to imitate in our praising of the Lord, are the praises which the psalmist proceeds to utter, declaring how gracious God is to his people, in building up their city, and in gathering in their outcasts, how kind to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds, how wise to tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names, how powerful as well as wise, and above all how good, especially as seen in his dealings with the meek and with the wicked of mankind, how altogether good!

These praises being first declared, the psalmist again calls on



us to "sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving," and then goes on to praise God further, setting forth his bountiful provision of food for all his creatures, by making rain to fall upon the earth, and grass to grow upon the mountains; whilst yet it is not in the growth, or health, or strength, or beautiful proportion of any of his creatures, that He takes delight, compared with the pleasure that He feels in them that fear Him, love Him, and obey Him. Praised then be his holy name for this, namely, that the strong and weak, the rich and poor, they that have great talents and they that have small, stand herein all on the like footing, are all privileged to enjoy the same hope of pleasing God, the same grace enabling them to give Him pleasure. Let them but fear to offend Him, let them but trust with humble dependence on his mercy, and behold the Lord God of heaven and earth "taketh pleasure in them."

And now once more the psalmist renews his exhortation to praise God, addressing himself especially to Jerusalem the city of God's chosen people, whether Israelites of old, or Christians at the present time. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion." Let us praise Him for having called us to be his people, for having made us citizens of his holy city. Let us praise Him for strengthening our church, by purifying the lives, and enlarging the affections of those who belong to it. Let us praise Him not only for the peace and plenty which we enjoy in respect to this world's goods, but further for the spiritual blessings of which we have been made to partake largely, peace with God through Christ, and the abundance of the grace of the Holy Ghost. The word and will of God, swift as it is, and sure, in the works of nature, is no less powerful and effectual in the operations of his grace. As snow, and frost, and ice, and cold, prevail at his command, or melt, whensoever He desires, so does also the deadness of the affections of the heart, the winter of man's soul, that dark and cold and barren state, in which God might justly leave us for our sins, so does this our natural condition of ignorance and sin, yield to the blessed influence of God's will and word. "He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow." The tears of repentance gush forth. And in the renewed hearts and lives of them that were once alienated by wicked works, these words of Isaiah are fulfilled: "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Isaiah 35. 6. Praise then be to God through Jesus Christ, for shewing us his word, his statutes, and his judgments! Praise be to Him for dealing with his chosen people more bountifully than with other nations! "Praise ye the Lord," the psalmist bids us. Let us thankfully and heartily reply: The Lord be praised.



*The psalmist exhorteth every thing to praise God.*

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|---|--|
| 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.         | vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word:  |
| 2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.                                | 9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:  |
| 3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.                             | 10 Beasts and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:  |
| 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.                 | 11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:   |
| 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.              | 12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:   |
| 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. | 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.                       |
| 7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:                                  | 14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; <i>even</i> of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. |
| 8 Fire, and hail; snow, and   | Praise ye the LORD.  |

#### LECTURE 1009.

*How few do what they can in praising God.*

"Praise ye the Lord." Whom does the psalmist here address? To whom does he speak these words? Nay, may we not more justly ask, To whom does he not address them? Which among all the children of men would he leave out, or allow to be silent in God's praise, when he calls on all creation, animate and inanimate, to praise the mighty Maker of the whole? How grievous is the thought, that so many of mankind begin with one consent to make excuse; that so few are found to praise the Lord, either with their lips, or with their lives! How doubly painful, that this apathy should prevail even amongst those whom the Lord has blessed most signally, those who stand in the place of the children of Israel, "a people near unto him!" Oh let us never henceforth overlook this first object of our being, to glorify Him who made us. Oh let us always bear in mind, that this is the end of our new creation in Christ Jesus, that we should live to the praise of the glory of Him by whose death we obtain life eternal.

The psalmist expresses his earnest desire that all God's creatures should praise Him, mentioning those which have not speech or language, that He may stir up in a more lively manner the devotion of those which have; and mentioning also those whose constant work and highest joy is for evermore to praise the Lord, that he may be more likely to prevail with us, who dwelling further from God's throne, are apt to be neglectful of his praise. "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts."

Yes; this they do continually, whether we thus call on them or not. And this we call on them to do, not as though they need our exhortation, but rather to remind ourselves, how greatly they delight in this divine employment; rather that we may hear them with the ear of faith, as thus they seem to echo back our words, praise ye Him all his people, praise ye Him all mankind.

Nor do we on the other hand expect that sun and moon and stars of light will speak with tongues like ours, and proclaim how great, how good, how wise, how just, how holy, and how merciful, the Lord God almighty is. Unconsciously they do the will of Him who made them. Unconsciously they run their round, and shed their glorious light; proving by their order, beauty, and conveniency, the skill and goodness of their Creator, unto those who are able to know, and to declare, that God is wisdom, and that God is love. Earth too, and all the creatures on its surface, the mighty deep, and the least as well as the greatest of its inhabitants, the air, and the fowls that fly therein, the seasons as they roll, storm and calm, mountains and vallies, the lofty cedar and the fruitful vine, all, if they cannot praise God as reasonable beings can, yet can and do redound unto his glory much more than many among reasonable beings, obeying the laws which He impressed on them at the first, and never failing to do that which He appoints; no, not whilst the world endures. Of this let us think, when the psalmist invites them to join in praising God. They do praise Him as far as lies in their power. Alas, of how few amongst ourselves can this be truly said, that in the matter of praising God, we do what we can!

"Kings of the earth, and all people, princes, and all judges of the earth." On all the psalmist calls expressly to praise the name of the Lord. But to which class shall we look for a reply? Is it in the palaces of the great, that God is known and acknowledged for a sure refuge? See Ps. 48. 2. Or is it in the cottages of the poor that the joyful sound of God's praise is to be heard continually? "Both young men, and maidens," the psalmist invites. But are not their songs more frequently expressive of joy in worldly pleasure, than of glorying in the name of the Lord? "Old men, and children," the psalmist adds. But how apt are the old to murmur at their infirmities, instead of rejoicing in the Lord! And how seldom do the hearts of children enter so thoroughly into the sense of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, as to fulfil the words applied to them by Christ, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise!" Matt. 21. 16. Many of all classes are lamentably deficient. But in every class there are some who do, as here invited, "praise the name of the Lord." God be praised that such there are! God multiply their number an hundred fold, until all mankind respond with joyful lips, and holy lives, to the exhortation of the psalmist, "Praise ye the Lord."

*The psalmist calleth on the church to praise God.*

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|---|--|
| <p>1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.</p> <p>2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.</p> <p>3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.</p> <p>4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.</p> <p>5 Let the saints be joyful in</p> | <p>glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.</p> <p>6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;</p> <p>7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;</p> <p>8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;</p> <p>9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.</p> |
|---|--|

## LECTURE 1010.

*The grounds on which the saints rejoice in the Lord.*

"Praise ye the Lord." What means the psalmist by praising God? It is to sing with the lips, to sing "a new song," a song befitting a renewed heart. It is to sing of God's majesty, power, and goodness "in the congregation of the saints." It is to join with others, and to sing aloud when by ourselves, to sing, or say, how good God is, to sing, or say, and feel it in the heart, to rejoice in feeling it, to rejoice in Him who made us, to rejoice in the spirit; it is for the children of Zion to "be joyful in their king." Dancing too in former days was a method of expressing religious joy. The gestures of the body, in harmony with sacred music, and with the utterance of the lips, were directed to express feelings of devotion, to shew man's sense of his Maker's glory. And accordingly the Psalmist thus exhorts the Israelites, "Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with timbrel and harp." Well may it hence be argued, that dancing is not always necessarily a sinful action, otherwise it would not have been here enjoined. But no less justly may it be observed upon this subject, that the dance which is here enjoined is that in which God's name is praised; either that which is actually a religious ceremony, and no such is practised among Christians, or that, which without sinful vanity or levity, is purely expressive of youthful joyfulness of health and strength, and so redounds unto the glory of the goodness of our Maker. Let then every gesture of the body, every utterance of the lips, every action of the hands, every feeling of the heart, be such as God has in his word ordained, enjoined, or approved of; and we shall understand how to praise God with all of them, we shall shew what the psalmist means by praising God, by shewing forth his praise in every thing.



“For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people.” Each action of our lives is regarded with good will by Him, when our lives are ruled according to his word. As a good and gracious Father, He looks down from heaven with pleasure on the happiness of his children, when their happiness arises from a right source, when it is regulated by those rules of moderation, contentment, and self-government, of faith and hope and charity, which He has prescribed for the guidance of our lives. And as there is joy in his presence “over one sinner that repenteth,” much more is there joy over our godly rejoicing; much more do angels and God Himself take pleasure in the peace and joy and glory of a penitent now reconciled unto God, and living in the happiness of a holy life and of an assured hope of life everlasting. Let therefore “the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.” Sin forgiven, grace bestowed, their souls justified, their lives sanctified, their Saviour glorified, let these things fill their hearts with ceaseless joy, their tongues with ceaseless praise. When they rise up, and when they lie down, “on their beds,” yea, and even in their graves, “let the saints be joyful in glory;” let them rejoice in being glorified, as they are by Him, who makes all things work together for their good. Let them enjoy with thanksgiving the good things God gives them here. Let them receive with no less heartfelt thankfulness, whatsoever tribulation He here thinks fit to lay upon them. And above all, let them rejoice in the hope of that eternal crown of glory, which God has prepared in a better life for them that love Him.

But together with “the high praises of God” “in their mouth,” there is to be “a two edged sword in their hand.” This the psalmist mentions as one of the means by which he would have believers praise the Lord, and “the children of Zion be joyful in their king.” He was aware that it was the calling of Israel of old to glorify God by rooting out the worshippers of vain idols from the land of Canaan, by being instruments in God’s hands of signal vengeance on the heathen, and executing on them “the judgment written.” It is for us to remember that “this honour have all his saints.” Let us beware then of disguising unconcern for sin under cover of compassion for sinners. Let us resolutely strive to root out sin now, as far as we can, in all lands, by the peaceful means set before us in the Gospel. And let us be aware, that a day is coming, in which Christ will take vengeance on them that are his enemies, and in which we shall not be meet to partake of the triumph of our Lord, unless we can join heartily with Him, as we shall then be able to do consistently with perfect love, in executing “the judgment written,” and in saying joyfully to each other, over the dreadful end of the ungodly, “Praise ye the Lord.”

*The psalmist exhorteth us to praise God many ways.*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. | 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. |
| 2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.           | 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.            |
| 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.           | 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.                   |

### LECTURE 1011.

*How to use the Book of Psalms in praising God.*

"Praise ye the Lord." Yes, He whom the psalmist bids us praise is the Lord God almighty. It is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. It is the one living and true God, everlasting, who was, and is, and ever will be; perfect in wisdom, infinite in might, majesty, and dominion, and whose mercy is over all his works. Him let us praise, "in his sanctuary;" remembering his gracious promise, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18. 20. Him let us praise in the firmament of his power; bearing in mind, that though He vouchsafes to be with us below on earth, his throne of glory is above, in heaven. Him let us praise "for his mighty acts," for the marvellous works that He has made, for the wonderful things that He has done. Him let us praise "according to his excellent greatness," or at least as near as we can according to it. For when we have done all, we may be sure of this, that we shall still be far, far, short. No instruments of music, however great their power, or sweet their sound, no tunefulness of voice, however skilfully adapted to give utterance to the devout affections of the heart, nay, not even the devout affections of the heart, however fervently they may glow with faith and hope and love, can be answerable to the excellency of the greatness and goodness of Him, whose praise we fain would celebrate. But let us do what we can. Let us use the best means we have to magnify and glorify our gracious God. Let us praise Him in the holy language of the psalms, which He has Himself vouchsafed to inspire. Let us praise Him with these songs of Zion; both by singing them, according to our ability and opportunity, to the solemn sound of sacred music, and also by relying on the promises, believing the doctrines, and fulfilling the duties, with which they abound; thus setting them to the tuneful harmony of a holy and happy life.



## THE PROVERBS I. 1—6.

### *The use of the Proverbs.*

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|--|---|
| 1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;                | ple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.   |
| 2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;  | 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: |
| 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; | 6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.               |
| 4 To give subtilty to the sim-   |   |

### LECTURE 1012.

#### *The benefit of knowledge.*

The object of the whole "book of Proverbs" is set forth in these words at the beginning. It is that we may "know wisdom and instruction," and "perceive the words of understanding." It is to make us better informed, and wiser, better able to understand, and judge, and decide. And especially it is to exercise and improve our faculties, in regard to "wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity." That is to say, it aims at teaching us practical wisdom. It will help us in knowing what is right to do, right as concerns God, our neighbour, and ourselves. It will enable us to detect the subtle snares, with which evil men and evil spirits lie in wait to beguile the unsuspecting. It is fitted "to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." Nor is it only the simple and the young who will hence derive instruction and advantage. The book of Proverbs is also well adapted for the use of those who are far advanced in knowledge. "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning: and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." And the means of his doing so may be thus described. "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation: the words of the wise, and their dark sayings." Proverbs are often dark or obscure, because they are expressed in as few words as possible. They are "dark sayings," because they usually imply much more than they express, and because they often allude to facts and customs which require to be previously understood. And they appear to have been sometimes made obscure on purpose, by way of exercising the skill and engaging the attention of the hearers, and so making the deeper impression on their minds. If then we would understand "the proverbs of Solomon," let us give our utmost attention to his words. And let this be our aim in understanding them, to grow in divine knowledge, to know better than we should do otherwise how we ought to walk and to please God. And let this be the end, object, and advantage, at which we aim in this and all other knowledge, to do that which we learn to be right, and to abound therein more and more. See 1 Thess. 4. 1.



*An exhortation to resist the enticement of sinners.*

- 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- 8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
- 9 For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.
- 10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.
- 11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:
- 12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:
- 13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:
- 14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:
- 15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:
- 16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.
- 17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.
- 18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood; they lurk privily for their *own* lives.
- 19 So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; *which* taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

## LECTURE 1013.

*That we ought not to consent when invited to transgress.*

The very first point in all knowledge is to know God. And the first feeling which is likely to arise in our minds on knowing God is fear: a sense of awe, if not of terror, on knowing that there is One so mighty, as to be the Creator of the universe, so holy, that "the heavens are not clean in his sight." Job 15. 15. "The fear of the Lord" is therefore "the beginning of knowledge." Without the fear of the Lord we can know nothing as we ought to know: for without it we can have no knowledge of God. Without this we should be apt to "despise wisdom and instruction." We should not care to know our duty, if we had no dread of offending God by not doing it. If we stood in no awe of a judgment to come, and of the Judge who will then reward every man according to his works, we should have little or no desire to know how we ought to walk in order to please God, we should make light of that practical wisdom in which the Proverbs are especially intended to instruct us.

Here then is the beginning or foundation of all other wisdom, to know God and to stand in awe of Him. And the first of all duties, which we have to put in practice, out of regard to the fear of God, is respectful obedience to our parents upon earth. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." This is a commandment which we ought to be brought up and trained to fulfil, long before we can understand the grounds of the obligation. And parents who insist on the obedience of their children, in all things lawful, from their earliest

infancy, do much towards preparing them to become obedient children of the most high God. Whilst they, on the other hand, who suffer their offspring to grow up wilful, headstrong, and rebellious, lay herein the most likely foundation for a life of disobedience towards God. Let the young remember this, and be careful to honour their father and their mother. Let them be assured that the advice and the commands given them by their earthly parents, if dutifully attended to and obeyed, will not only be an ornament to their character on earth, but a jewel in their crown in heaven.

Obedience to parents is the first duty which the young are called upon to practise. The enticement of evil companions is one of their first temptations. And as long as youth lasts, it is a temptation to which they are peculiarly liable. The aged and experienced are likely to be more cautious, and are therefore less liable to be imposed upon by the enticing words of others. But the young are soon excited, and easily wrought upon by false information and delusive hopes. Thus are many led into habits of lawless violence, in the hope of making great and speedy gains. And as some were tempted in the times of Solomon to join themselves to bands of plunderers, who laid wait for travellers in lonely wilds, so are many young persons now induced, by flattering speeches and delusive prospects, to league with others in such practices as poaching and smuggling, and are led on from breaking the laws of man to violating the most plain commandments of God. Many by the like enticements of wicked company and evil counsel are decoyed into the haunts of drunkenness, gambling, and all kinds of debauchery. Nor are they that have grown old always safe from these allurements, or always proof against the persuasion of pretended friends, who would fain beguile them into sin. All therefore are concerned to listen to the words of Solomon, "if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Even the birds, which by the skill of man are often taken captive, cannot be caught by a net which is spread plainly in their sight. Let not then man be decoyed by his fellow creature, when the word of God has thus plainly pointed out the snares which are set against the welfare of his soul. It is life that is at stake; life, and liberty; to be free from the bondage of sin, to live for evermore. Oh let us not, when we know our danger, let us not be so foolish as to fall into the snare. But whenever the words of wicked men invite us to do that which our conscience disapproves, let us be upon our guard, and repeat to ourselves these seasonable words of warning: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

*The warning words of divine wisdom.*

- 20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:
- 21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,
- 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?
- 23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.
- 24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
- 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:
- 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;
- 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.
- 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:
- 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:
- 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.
- 31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.
- 32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.
- 33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

## LECTURE 1014.

*The folly of rejecting warnings.*

How awakening are the warning words of wisdom here set forth! How miserable is the case of those who refuse to hear her voice! How plain, how loud, how public, how continual, are the expostulation against sin, and notice of judgment to come, which are given to every one amongst us! Within we have conscience, an ever present monitor. At hand there is the Bible, to tell us the whole truth without disguise. At church, and at home also, there is the minister of God, bearing his message of mercy, and at the same time declaring his threats of punishment. And we cannot go forth into the streets, without being oftentimes reminded by some passing funeral, that here we have no abiding place, that young and old, rich and poor, are all being fast hurried along to a place where no repentance can avail.

“How long,” then, “ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?” How long, ye who are selfish, vain, or covetous, how long will ye seek your own things, and love this present world, instead of loving God, and seeking the things of Christ? How long, ye intemperate or impure, will ye cleave to sensual pleasures,



and indulge the sinful lusts of the flesh? How long, ye idle, will ye persist in idleness, ye slothful, in sloth, ye cruel, in cruelty, ye careless, in caring for none of these things? How long, ye that make light of religion, will ye jest at things divine? And ye that are so abandoned to sin as to hate the light of truth, how long will ye be guilty of hating it? Simplicity this is, in the worst sense, folly, yea, the height of foolishness. For hear now the dreadful and sure consequence of cleaving unto sin, when you might have repented with amendment of life. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." A dreadful sentence; a terrible threatening; and not a little aggravated by the words which follow, shewing that it will then be hopeless to repent. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof."

Most terrible sentence of righteous retribution! Most foolish they, who with this sentence sounding in their ears, set their hearts upon sin, and close their minds against conviction! We ask them, How long will ye persist? We answer, the time is short. Already the seed is sown, of which they will reap the harvest in eternity. The day is at hand, when they must "eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." Their turning away from instruction will lead to their being rejected by Him. And the prosperity which they now enjoy for a moment, whilst acting in defiance of his commandments, will end in their everlasting destruction. What foolishness, what madness then is this; not to hearken to the voice of heavenly wisdom, not to listen to its warnings, not to lay to heart its precious promises! Yes, it has most precious promises as well as fearful warnings; and whilst it proclaims to the wicked the sad end of persisting in their wickedness, it no less plainly declares, for the encouragement of those who are willing to repent, "whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." God grant that we may be persuaded by his terrors, if needful, or, far better, may be constrained by the glad tidings of his love, to abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good! God give us the inestimable privilege of dwelling in safety from the snares of sin, and in being assured in our hearts by grace against the fear of endless misery!

*How to find knowledge. The use thereof.*

- 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;  
 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding;  
 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding;  
 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures;  
 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.  
 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding.  
 7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly.  
 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.  
 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path.  
 10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;  
 11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:  
 12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things;  
 13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;  
 14 Who rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked;  
 15 Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths:  
 16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words;  
 17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.  
 18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.  
 19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.  
 20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*, and keep the paths of the righteous.  
 21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.  
 22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

## LECTURE 1015.

*Against being enticed to forsake God.*

In order to attain unto the sound practical wisdom set before us in this book, we must exert ourselves in the search after it; we must diligently seek it by the appointed means of prayer and study of the word of God. It is, as our Lord said, "like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Matt. 13. 44. And we ought especially to remark the reason here assigned to prove the necessity of exertion on our part; "For the Lord giveth wisdom." That it is the gift of God, this by no means excuses us, as many seem to



think, in taking no pains for its attainment ; but rather this is a motive binding on our consciences to study and to pray with all our power ; even as the apostle Paul also has exhorted us, " work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," for this very reason assigned, " For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2. 12, 13.

This reasoning may be justly applied to every kind of temptation, to the zeal, exertion, and stedfast resolution, with which we ought to encounter every trial. And here especially let us observe, that this is our best way to escape from the snares laid in our path either by evil disposed men, or by abandoned women. If we would not consent to the enticement of sinners, let us both exert the utmost of our strength, and at the same time rely with implicit confidence on the strength which God alone can give us. Let us reason with ourselves on the foolishness of bartering our everlasting happiness for the delusive prospect of present pleasure. But manifest as this folly is, and foolish, nay almost mad as we must be, to make this fatal bargain, let us not trust that we should be able to resist the solicitations of sin, except so far as God is pleased to give us the wisdom which is from above.

That woman, who was created on purpose to be a help meet for man, should still often prove the means of tempting him to his ruin, is no more than we might expect after the fall of Adam through the persuasion of Eve. And so great is the corruption of heart, where the restraints of principle and modesty have been thoroughly broken through in a wicked woman, that such an one is often made mention of in Scripture as a type of an idolatrous church. And to be entangled in the evil company of such an one represents to us the case of those who forsake God for idols. Let us therefore understand the words before us not only in their more obvious application, but also as a warning against the practices of idolatry. And let us beware lest we be ensnared, either by the lusts of the flesh, or by the idols of wealth, honour, ease, or luxury, to turn aside from the way of life into the path that ends in everlasting destruction.



*Exhortations to various duties.*

1 My son, forget not my law; with plenty, and thy presses but let thine heart keep my shall burst out with new wine. commandments:

2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. 11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth. 13 Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding.

4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of GOD and man. 14 For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 15 She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. 16 Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honour.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. 17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. 18 She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is every one* that retaineth her.

9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns be filled

## LECTURE 1016.

*Religion the way of pleasantness and peace.*

Lest we should forget the divine precepts here given us, we are exhorted to bind them about the neck, and to write them upon the tablets of the heart. These figures of speech shew us how closely we need to cherish the recollection of God's commandments, as well as of his mercy and truth. To know these things once is not enough. To feel them deeply at intervals is not enough. It is easy to feel thus, and to sin wilfully between whiles. But we must not expect to enjoy the blessings attached to the keeping of God's commandments, unless we keep them consistently, unless for this end we remember them constantly. And with a view to this we must give heed to the exhortation following: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." We may reason wisely as to the folly of forgetting any thing of such supreme importance as God's holy

will and commandment; but they who reason wisely are often found to act foolishly. And the only way to be secure from the foolishness of disobeying God, is to trust in Him with the whole heart.

Great and manifold are the blessings here promised to those, who, instead of trusting in their own wisdom, and walking in their own ways, "fear the Lord, and depart from evil." It shall redound to their prosperity here and hereafter. Not only the increase of wealth, but also of health and strength of body, are mentioned as consequences, which follow, under God's blessing, on the fulfilment of his gracious will. But even in the Old Testament, where temporal blessings are most largely dwelt upon, it is added by way of caution to the devout, lest they should form expectations never to be realized: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." And in the New Testament, where these words are brought forward as strictly applicable to Christians, we are further taught to glory in tribulation, and are led to look upon a lot of poverty, sickness, or sorrow, as matter of thankfulness to God, when He thinks fit to send it, no less than when it pleases Him to give us wealth, and health, and joyfulness.

And yet it is not less true of religion now, than it was of old, and ever has been from the first, that "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The being wise unto salvation, the knowledge of the truth together with the love of it, the understanding of God's ways together with the doing of his will, these things are infallibly productive of true peace and true pleasure even in this present life. They do indeed expose us to strife, and make us liable to many a pain, which we might escape by loving the world, and serving Satan. But then they give us peace in the midst of strife, and pleasure that prevails over pain. They give us peace of mind, and joy in the soul. They usually tend also in the main to our present health and prosperity. But at all events they ensure our everlasting happiness. And what is worthy to be mentioned in comparison of this? What need we grudge to suffer, to lose, or to forego, if we may thereby be made more meet to partake of the riches of eternity, of pleasures at God's right hand for evermore?



*Further exhortations to duty.*

19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion:

22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when

it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

30 Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

32 For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the portion of fools.

## LECTURE 1017.

*Of knowing the right means towards life eternal.*

The word "wisdom" in this book seems usually to mean practical wisdom, the being wise unto salvation. But here we are told that "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens." This must mean the skill exercised by God in the work of creation. And again, "By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew." God knows the means, yea, devises the means, needful for attaining to these wondrous ends. This is divine wisdom in Him. For man it is enough to know the means of attaining unto life eternal, means not of his own devising, means devised and revealed to him by God. The man who knows these is wise. And the divine wisdom attainable by man, has this point in common with the wisdom of God, each is the knowing the right means towards the end proposed, the knowing them, and the knowing how to use them.

Let us study in this book of God's teaching the means towards



a holy and a happy life, the means of attaining life eternal. Let us lay to heart the blessed assurances here given us of safety and of the sense of security, provided we keep this "sound wisdom and discretion." "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet." What precious promises are these! How applicable not only to our rest each night, but also to the sweet repose of those who sleep in Jesus, who depart and are with Christ, who are taken from the miseries of this sinful life, and wait, in consciousness of rest, at peace, and in communion with their Saviour, until the consummation of their joy and glory at his second coming! Happy they, who whilst they live could hear without dismay the solemn proclamation, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," Matt. 6. 6; and who when they are called upon to die, lie down as resignedly, contentedly, and cheerfully, as if it were for their night's sleep!

Among the practices and dispositions required of such as would enjoy this peace of God, are these which follow: not to withhold that which is due to others, when we are able to make it good, not to put off till to morrow any payment or service which we ought to render to our neighbour to day; not to take advantage of the confidence reposed in us; not to strive with another who has done us no harm; not to envy the oppressor, nor to choose his ways; no, not though they seem to lead ever so surely to present gain or pleasure. "For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous." And so also on one side is his curse, on the other his blessing, on the one his scorn, on the other his grace, on the one shame, on the other glory. So wide is the difference between the lot of the wicked and that of the just, of scorners and of the lowly, of fools and of the wise! So foolish are they who adopt means for happiness, which according to the settled ordinance of God lead to endless misery! So wise, so truly and so only wise are they, who aiming at eternal happiness, study to learn from God's word the way which leads thereto, and diligently endeavour by help of his all sufficient grace to keep it!

*Solomon declareth how his father instructed him.*

- 1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.
- 2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.
- 3 For I was my father's son, tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother.
- 4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.
- 5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.
- 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.
- 7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.
- 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.
- 9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.
- 10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.
- 11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.
- 12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
- 13 Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: keep her; for she *is* thy life.
- 14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*.
- 15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.
- 16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall.
- 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.
- 18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
- 19 The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.
- 20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.
- 21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.
- 22 For they *are* life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.
- 23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.
- 24 Put away from thee a forward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.
- 25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
- 26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.
- 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

#### LECTURE 1018.

*The duty of parents to instruct their children.*

This chapter contains an interesting account of the method in which Solomon, who wrote this book, had been taught wisdom



by his father. When he calls upon the young to hear him, and promises to give them "the instruction of a father," he states that he had in like manner been instructed in his own youth by David; and he gives us to understand, that the exhortations following were in the main the same as those which he had himself been accustomed to receive. This is one of the most important of all means for transmitting the knowledge of the truth, and for propagating far and wide the love of it, and the practice of a holy life. Let parents use their authority for this object. Let them influence their offspring for good, for the good of the never dying soul, not only by the force of authority, but by the constraining power of love. Let them never be content to delegate to others this portion of parental oversight; but let them make it a point of conscience to teach their children with their own lips the excellency of divine wisdom, the dangers of a wicked course of life, and the happy consequences of sincerely serving God.

It has been thought that in the patriarchal times every father was a priest in his own family. And certainly, under the Gospel, all parents are bound to act as ministers to their children, by doing all that in them lies to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. 6. 4. To have taught them in the way of wisdom, and led them in the right paths, what a delightful thing must this be for parents to reflect upon, in regard to those whom they have been the means of bringing into the world! To set before them the path of the just, how full it is of light and glory, increasing in brightness of hope and joy, even as the progress of the early dawn unto the full sunshine of the day, to set forth the excellency of this course, and the darkness of the way of the wicked, to point out the dangers of evil company, and to impress upon the young the importance of keeping the heart sincere, all this is no small field of usefulness for the more advanced in years. And he who shall do this with zeal and prudence, so as to work effectually, according to his ability, with those who are growing up around him, will have done good service unto God, and will not have lived in vain. May such parents abound! May all parents, as far as in them lies, be such! May all delight in transmitting to their offspring the knowledge and the love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ!



*The end of following after the strange woman.*

At all times and in all ways  
I have followed after the strange woman.

For she has seduced me  
with her sweet words, and has  
drawn me away from my teachers.

For she has seduced me  
with her sweet words, and has  
drawn me away from my teachers.

For she has seduced me  
with her sweet words, and has  
drawn me away from my teachers.

For she has seduced me  
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drawn me away from my teachers.

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with her sweet words, and has  
drawn me away from my teachers.

For she has seduced me  
with her sweet words, and has  
drawn me away from my teachers.

For she has seduced me  
with her sweet words, and has  
drawn me away from my teachers.

voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!

I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.

Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.

Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.

Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

LECTURE 1019.

*Marriage. God's ordinance for man's benefit.*

The subject of this chapter is one which is of the utmost importance to the happiness of mankind in general. For whilst the marriage union, as ordained by God, is the foundation and the bond of all other social relations, there are, on the other hand, scarcely any social evils greater than those, which arise from the unlawful and unhalloved intercourse of unmarried men and

women. But the evil consequences here chiefly pointed out, are not so much those which affect society, as those which fall on the individual offenders. And the man who is tempted to give ear to the deceitful words of an abandoned woman may here take warning, that he must expect to suffer the loss of health and strength, of substance and of character, of peace of mind, and of his soul's salvation. How bitter is the compunction awaiting those who fall, after being warned so faithfully and fully by God's own word! With what anguish of remorse must such as they afterwards reflect upon their folly in slighting instruction, on the hatefulness of their sin in the sight of the congregation of God's people, much more before God Himself!

As one chief help to avoid the sin here denounced, Solomon directs attention to the holy state of matrimony. And in like manner St. Paul, who most forcibly points out to the Corinthians the sinfulness of this sin, see 1 Cor. 6, writes thus in the same Epistle, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." 1 Cor. 7. 2. Strange, that in the face of testimony so plain, both in the Old Testament and in the New, there should have been a disposition amongst many to cast a slur on the wedded state, under the notion that the single life is in itself more excellent and holy! Strange, that the church of Rome, acting on this notion, should require all its ministers to be single, and should strongly urge thousands and millions of young persons, often when far too young to know what they are about, to bind themselves irrevocably never to be wedded! God be praised that we of this church and nation have escaped this deadly error, have been set free from this cruel bondage! Only let us watch so to use the liberty which God has given us, as not to neglect that self restraint and self denial which God commands. And whether we be married or single in this present life, let us labour to attain unto that resurrection, wherein "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." Matt. 22. 30.

*Against idleness, illness, and frowardness.*

10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep :

11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers ;

14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually ; he soweth discord.

15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly ; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

16 These six things doth the Lord hate : yea, seven are an abomination unto him :

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

## LECTURE 1020.

*The character of an arrogant, false, and cruel man.*

Young men are here warned of the risks they run if they only become surety for one another. Not that it is wrong ever to be surety for a friend : but that it is a matter requiring consideration : since a man may lose his own liberty, and all his own means of usefulness through his friend's dishonesty or extravagance. He therefore who has undertaken this risk, ought to look to it that his friend, for whom he stands surety, discharges his debt, or fulfils the obligation entered into, be it what it may, with the least possible delay. And we may apply this rule to the case of Christian sponsors, godfathers and godmothers, who do well to undertake so responsible an office, provided they fully purpose to discharge the duties it involves ; provided they pray, and watch, and labour, that the children for whom they answer redeem the pledges given in their behalf.



From improvidence in suretyship Solomon turns to idleness and laziness; and bids the sluggard go to the ant, and learn wisdom from her ways. "Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." An instructive pattern of industry and forethought unto all, but more especially to the young; more especially to those who have now the best of their strength at their disposal, and who are often tempted to abuse and waste it. A pattern instructive to us all in regard to our spiritual attainments; teaching us to work whilst it is called to day. And so is also the warning against slothfulness applicable to the case of our spiritual proficiency; and fit to remind us of the apostolic exhortation, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5. 14.

Next follows a description of "a naughty person, a wicked man," who "walketh with a froward mouth." And this character appears to be described, on purpose that the young may be upon their guard, against the various signs which he is likely to make use of in order to decoy them into sin. It is a common case of false shame, for a young man to be ashamed of being ignorant of evil. And such a wicked man as is here described is apt to take advantage of this weakness, and to make a sort of mystery of the sins which he delights in, just sufficient to excite the curiosity, and to work upon the vanity, of those whom he would initiate in wickedness. A dreadful character. And terrible is the end here denounced on such an one: "Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly: suddenly shall he be broken without remedy."

In such an one there seems to be combined the six, yea, seven evil properties, which are here said to be abomination unto the Lord. We may see him, for it is alas no uncommon character, proud in his looks, false in his words, violent with his hands, apt to devise wickedness, swift to do harm, ready to bear false witness, and delighting in making mischief among brethren. We may see such men as these, different indeed in manners according to their station in society, but all alike in these evil propensities of the heart. We may see them arrogating to themselves the credit of being the only persons in the world who know how to enjoy life. And we may often see the success of their arrogant pretensions, in the numbers who foolishly follow and admire them. For us it is enough to know, that the qualities in which they pride themselves are things hateful to the Lord. And the popularity of such characters in their own societies may remind us of our Saviour's warning words, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Luke 16. 15.

*Of obeying parental instruction.*

20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

27 Can a man take fire in his

bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?

29 So he that toucheth his neighbour's wife: whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry:

31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.

32 But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

33 A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

34 For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

35 He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

## LECTURE 1021.

*The habit of submission to authority.*

If it be the duty of parents to give good religious counsel and instruction to their children, it is no less incumbent upon children to remember and obey the admonitions of their parents. This is that which Solomon means in saying of parental injunctions, "Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck." And this is the fruit of such obedience which he proposes to the young, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." So profitable, so delightful, is the habit of obeying the injunctions of our parents, when these are in harmony with the will of God. For then we may in truth regard them as God's own instruction and commandments, given unto us by those whom God has authorized and commissioned to instruct and to command.

"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Such is the inspired

assurance of Solomon; very different from the notions now prevailing, that the young are to be brought up by persuasion more than by commandment, and to be led by their own sense of what is honourable rather than by law, and that reproofs of instruction may well be superseded by the amusement of the mind in such knowledge as is easily acquired, and which it costs no pains to put in practice. Whatever may be said in behalf of such schemes for the nurture of the young, we may be sure that it is of the utmost consequence to bring them up in the habit of submission to authority. It is good for them to obey implicitly those who have authority to command them. It is good that they should be subject unto law, order, and discipline, for conscience sake. It is good for them to receive instruction patiently and meekly, even when it comes in the unwelcome form of parental reproof.

It is by means like these that the youthful mind may best be trained to resist the temptations of after life. And one of the first and strongest that is likely to present itself is here particularly pointed out, "To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman." And accordingly Solomon proceeds to give warning, as to a son, against yielding to the enticements which this sin holds out. To be ruined in property, and in character, is but a part of the bitter fruits ensuing on the practices here denounced. When they lead, as they often do, to the commission of adultery, they are frequently attended with the risk of life. So deep is the injury, and oftentimes so speedy the revenge, of the husband thus irreparably wronged. But in any case they put in jeopardy that which is more precious than life itself, the hope of life eternal. For thus it is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Heb. 13. 4. And it is of such evil practices as these that S. Paul writes thus to the Ephesians: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Eph. 5. 6. And observe it is on "the children of disobedience." It is for want of obeying the commandment that they fall into these sins. It is because they are used to follow their own will, and indulge their own desires, instead of obeying the will and word of God. May God then grant unto us, that if young we may grow up, and if grown up may grow old, in the habit of doing that which we are bidden, by those who have authority to command us, and above all, in the habit of doing that which we are commanded by God Himself!



*The cry of an abandoned woman described.*

1. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
2. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
3. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
4. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
5. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
6. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
7. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
8. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
9. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
10. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
11. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
12. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
13. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
14. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
15. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
16. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
17. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
18. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
19. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
20. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
21. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
22. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
23. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
24. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
25. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
26. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*
27. *As the dew of the night, and as the frost of the morning, so have I wept.*

## LECTURE 1022.

*The sins of the adulterer hard to repent of.*

Solomon was one who had himself suffered greatly by the temptation, which he here makes mention of. And though the strange women who turned his heart away from God are described as his wives and concubines, yet considering his age when this happened, his renown for wisdom, and his great religious advantages, he would scarcely hold himself to be more excusable than this "young man devoid of understanding," who yielded to the fair speech of an adulteress. It is delightful to hope, as many have done, that these words of warning were written, when the writer had himself seen the folly of his ways, and had been brought by the grace of God to repentance. And when we see, as we do here, with what art and perseverance the wicked ensnare others to their ruin, we may well reflect, how zealous and laborious the penitent ought to be, in striving to warn and guard their brethren from the sins in which they have themselves fallen.

But whether Solomon was spared time for repentance, or ever obtained grace to repent, is more than we have any means of knowing. And we have too much reason to fear, that they who practise the sin here denounced find it one of the hardest to repent of. It is like the ox going to the slaughter, and seldom allowed respite or escape. It is "as a bird hasteth to the snare," which once thoroughly entangled and taken, is not likely to be spared its liberty or life. But when we have to treat of sins of which it is a shame to speak, we do well to confine ourselves as far as possible to the words of Scripture, and to impress ourselves, as deeply as possible, with the awful threatenings and earnest exhortations of God's own most holy word: "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth." Thus does Solomon sum up his forcible description of the snares of an abandoned woman: "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

*Wisdom proclaimeth herself aloud.*

- 1 Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?  
 2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.  
 3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.  
 4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.  
 5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.  
 6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.  
 7 For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.  
 8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.  
 9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.  
 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.  
 11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.  
 12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.  
 13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.  
 14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.  
 15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.  
 16 By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.  
 17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.  
 18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.  
 19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.  
 20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:  
 21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

## LECTURE 1023.

*Of seeking for wisdom, and loving it.*

“Doth not wisdom cry?” Yes, thanks be to almighty God, her voice both is and has been always to be heard, by all who are inclined to hear it. Nay, and also they who are averse to it cannot but sometimes be compelled to listen. There is conscience, and the common consent of all the better portion of mankind; there is the anguish of remorse on the part of the ungodly; there is the word of God; and there are the ministers of the Gospel; there is Christ the Messenger of the covenant, our Prophet, Priest, and King; and there is the Holy Spirit of God, working in us and with us that which is good; all these bear testimony to



the truth, and urge us to be wise in time, wise unto salvation. And what treasures of the earth can we for one moment set in competition with this wisdom which is from above? What prudence, skill, or talent, can avail to give us real or lasting happiness, without the knowledge of divine truth? This is the only prudence worthy of the name, not that which the worldly wise call prudence, but forethought for eternity. This is the most valuable inventive faculty, to find through God's gracious help the way that leads to heaven.

True wisdom teaches us to hate evil, and to renounce pride and arrogance. It is the secret of the superiority of one man over another, the strength of the strong, the honour of the honourable. Kings, princes, and judges of the earth, hence derive their respect and authority. For if it were not expected of them that they will judge according unto right, and rule for the advantage of their people, they would not have been so generally established and respected among men. To refuse the evil and to choose the good, to aim at a right object, and by the best means, to have the sense to do this, as well as knowing how it is to be done, this it seems is that which is here meant by wisdom; this is that which makes one man wiser and stronger and better than another. Love then this wisdom, and it will requite your love; it will amply make up for all the pains you take in its behalf. Seek it early, to day, whilst it is called to day. And fear not but that you will find it. And with it you will at the same time find riches more lasting than silver and gold, the treasures and the honours of eternity.

And what are the right objects at which we ought to aim? What are the best means by which we ought to compass them? Eternal life, heavenly happiness, the serving and pleasing God whilst here, the glorifying his holy name to all eternity in heaven; these are the true ends of man's existence, these the objects at which it is man's true wisdom to be continually aiming. And the means thereto are faith in Christ, repentance from dead works, and earnest faithful prayer to God in Christ's name, for grace to lead a godly life. Our wisdom is not our own. It must be the gift of God through Christ. Through Him let us seek it. And as it is set forth in Him let us love it. And, behold, in Him we may be sure of finding it; to our own eternal gain.

*Wisdom the attribute of God.*

22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water.

25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

27 When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

28 When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters

should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

30 Then I was by him, *as one* brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him;

31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men.

32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed *are they that keep my ways*.

33 Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

34 Blessed *is* the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.

36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

## LECTURE 1024.

*Of approaching to the likeness of divine wisdom.*

By a strong figure of speech wisdom is in this chapter and elsewhere represented as a person, one that speaks and acts. And we are thus taught, in the most lively manner, how excellent a thing it is to be wise; how like this renders us unto that great God "who by his excellent wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever." Ps. 136. 5. Wisdom is one of the attributes of God from everlasting. And strictly speaking it is exclusively his attribute; so that no one except God can be truly called wise. For so S. Paul, writing to the Romans, says, "To God only wise be glory." Rom. 16. 27. And again writing to Timothy, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." 1 Tim. 1. 17. And in like manner S. Jude, "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." Thus is wisdom in its highest sense God's own exclusive attribute. But when it seemed good to the only wise God to make man in his own image, He imparted to us a capacity for excellences which bear

a likeness to his own. Thus we are exhorted to be holy as He is holy, see 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16, though we know that, strictly speaking, "There is none good but one." Matt. 19. 17. So also whilst we hold that God alone is truly wise, yet we believe that there is within our reach a wisdom not unlike to his, a wisdom for which we are bound to seek, and which, with his help, we may be sure to find.

The creation of all the universe around us is one fruit of the wisdom of almighty God, of that wisdom which He had before the worlds began. And this is here set forth in language the most striking and sublime; language which takes us back to before the beginning of created things, and represents to us our almighty Maker seeing the end from the beginning, and framing and forming all the great and glorious orbs of light, and the heavens in which they occupy their places, and all their attendant planets, and specially all the elements of this our earth, and all their various combinations, at once so grand in the conception, and so curiously and perfectly finished in the execution, down to the least leaf of the smallest plant, or least limb of the most minute insect. And good as were all his works, lo, it was "in the habitable parts of his earth," that his wisdom was most inclined to rejoice, and its "delights were with the sons of men." Of all the beings whom He then created and made, man was the chief work of his hand, the chief object of his love, the chief source of his joy and glory.

And how then may we best approach unto the likeness of this divine wisdom! How but by endeavouring, as far as lies in us, to fulfil the ends for which we were created. Create we cannot. Neither can we redeem. But we can answer to the ends of our creation. We can glorify Him who redeemed us, by living as his redeemed people. We are wise when we are that which God in his wisdom would have us to be. We find wisdom, when our will is conformed to his, and when we have the same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. See Phil. 2. 5. And finding this wisdom we find life, and obtain favour of the Lord. Whilst he who does violence to these rules of right living, does wrong to his own soul. And he who is so abandoned as to hate true wisdom, may be said ever to "love death." May God make us wise unto salvation! May we through his grace attain unto an effectual faith in that blessed Saviour, who, according to the apostle's statement, is made unto us wisdom, as well as "righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. 1. 30.



*Wisdom's invitation ; and that of the strange woman.*

1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars :

2 She hath killed her beasts ; she hath mingled her wine ; she hath also furnished her table.

3 She hath sent forth her maidens : she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither : *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine *which* I have mingled.

6 Forsake the foolish, and live ; and go in the way of understanding.

7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame : and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* getteth himself a blot.

8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee : rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser : teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.

10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom : and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself : but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*.

13 A foolish woman *is* clamorous : *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

15 To call passengers who go right on their ways :

16 Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither : and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.

18 But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there ; and *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

## LECTURE 1025.

*The end of those who resort to an abandoned woman.*

Wisdom is here personified in the character of a woman, probably as a queen, who having fitted up her palace, and prepared a great feast, sends forth her attendant maidens, to invite guests to partake of it. This figure of an invitation to a feast was often made use of by our blessed Lord, to represent our call into the kingdom of heaven. It may suggest to us this important truth, that the ways of divine wisdom are ways of plenteous enjoyment ; and that by coming where wisdom calls us, and doing that which wisdom bids us, we are admitted to a feast of good things, compared with which all the pleasures and glories of a sensual and worldly life are as the husks fit for swine to eat.

This invitation of wisdom is addressed in the first instance to the simple. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners

to repentance. See Matt. 9. 13. But the feast of good things here set forth includes due provision for every kind of guest. The simple may learn wisdom. The wise may become "yet wiser." Sinners may learn how to repent. Penitents may learn how to amend their lives. And they whose lives and hearts have been changed for the better, may be taught to grow in grace and godliness. Only there is no invitation given to the scorner, no food provided fit for those who reject the truth with contempt. For of such as them it is written in the Gospel, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matt. 7. 6.

But in order to estimate aright the excellency of sound religious wisdom, it is well to compare it with the miserable foolishness of a sinful life. And in making the comparison, wisdom must be personified, if we would describe its excellency in a lively manner. For in whom can we find it instanced, in what kind of character that we meet with among men? But foolishness, the foolishness of wickedness, may be set before us in many a familiar case, and in none more striking, or likely to convince us, than in the instance of an abandoned woman. She too invites the simple to come in; but it is in order to beguile them to their ruin. She practises upon their simplicity in saying, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." She would fain persuade them to take delight in that which is forbidden by God, instead of enjoying thankfully that which He allows. But let him whose heart inclines towards her house, hearken to this which is set down concerning him: "He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." Yes, such is the true account of all who resort thither. Dead they are to shame, dead to holiness, dead to the hope of heaven. Their lawless passions, preying on their hearts and lives, are to them as a foretaste of that endless fire, to which they look forward as justly their due. And being actually in the depths of sin, they are spoken of as if they were already, where, if they repent not, they must be soon, in the depths of death and hell.

*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

- 1 The Proverbs of Solomon. wicked shall rot.  
 2 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.  
 3 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.  
 4 The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.  
 5 The righteous fear that deal not with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.  
 6 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.  
 7 Seedings are sown the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.  
 8 The memory of the just is blessing: but the name of the wicked shall rot.  
 9 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.  
 10 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.  
 11 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.  
 12 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.  
 13 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.  
 14 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.  
 15 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

## LECTURE 1026.

*The expediency of holiness manifested by contrast.*

In the previous portion of this book we have met with many exhortations to holy practice. Here we enter upon the Proverbs proper, so called, namely, short and striking sayings on practical subjects such as may be easily remembered, and may serve when they come to the memory, to guide us in the way we ought to walk in, if we would be happy here and hereafter. Thus if parents would learn the consequences of bringing up their children in wisdom or in folly, or if children would consider the effect of their conduct on the happiness of their parents, they may call to mind the first proverb here set down, "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." Or if we would know the difference between the fruit of sin, and that of holiness, we may recollect, that "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death."

This difference is here set before us in various lights. We are assured for our encouragement that "the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish; but he casteth away the substance of the wicked." And it is suggested, that this is often brought



to pass through the diligence and forethought of those who serve God, and through the neglect and slothfulness of them that serve Him not. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," and again, "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son." Whilst on the other hand, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand;" and again, "he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame." We are assured further, that "Blessings are upon the head of the just;" the hand being laid upon the head in the act of blessing; "but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked," prevents it from blessing or being blessed. And besides all these immediate consequences, even "The memory of the just is blessed : but the name of the wicked shall rot."

In the remainder of these proverbs a contrast is drawn between the conduct of the wise in receiving commandments and laying them up in their hearts, in walking uprightly, in regulating the utterance of their lips, especially in the charitable language with which they draw a veil over the sins of others, in manifesting wisdom to others, and laying it up for themselves; a contrast is drawn between the conduct of the wise in these particulars, and the misconduct of the foolish, who talk where they ought to act, and pervert their ways instead of guiding them by God's commandments, whose very looks as well as words communicate evil, whose lips are full of violence, and their hearts filled with hatred and strife, whose foolishness exposes them to the stripes ordained in the Law, their own mouth often bringing their own ruin on their heads. This kind of contrast is to be met with in many of the proverbs, and is one of the most likely means to convince us both of the evil of sin and of the excellency of holiness. For excellent as holiness is in itself, it appears much more so when we view its blessed fruits in comparison with the miserable condition of the wicked. We should not so highly prize the brightness of light, if we had never known what it is to be in darkness. Neither should we be apt to think the darkness so black and cheerless, if we had never seen the bright shining of the light. Let us therefore look at both objects, the righteous and the wicked man, together. Let us compare them in their conduct, in their conversation, and above all in their end. But manifest as is the difference to our right reason, let us not deem that even so we shall be sure to choose aright, unless God gives us grace to see the truth, and seeing it to love it, and to live accordingly.

*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

- 15 The rich man's wealth is granted.  
his strong city: the destruction  
of the poor is their poverty.
- 16 The labour of the righteous  
*tendeth* to life: the fruit of the  
wicked to sin.
- 17 He *is in* the way of life  
that keepeth instruction: but  
he that refuseth reproof erreth.
- 18 He that hideth hatred *with*  
lying lips, and he that uttereth  
a slander, *is* a fool.
- 19 In the multitude of words  
there wanteth not sin: but he  
that refraineth his lips *is* wise.
- 20 The tongue of the just *is*  
*as* choice silver: the heart of  
the wicked *is* little worth.
- 21 The lips of the righteous  
feed many: but fools die for  
want of wisdom.
- 22 The blessing of the LORD,  
it maketh rich, and he addeth  
no sorrow with it.
- 23 *It is* as sport to a fool to do  
mischief: but a man of under-  
standing hath wisdom.
- 24 The fear of the wicked, it  
shall come upon him: but the  
desire of the righteous shall be
- 25 As the whirlwind passeth,  
*so is* the wicked no *more*: but  
the righteous *is* an everlasting  
foundation.
- 26 As vinegar to the teeth,  
and as smoke to the eyes, *so is*  
the sluggard to them that send  
him.
- 27 The fear of the LORD pro-  
longeth days: but the years of  
the wicked shall be shortened.
- 28 The hope of the righteous  
*shall be* gladness: but the ex-  
pectation of the wicked shall  
perish.
- 29 The way of the LORD *is*  
strength to the upright: but de-  
struction *shall be* to the work-  
ers of iniquity.
- 30 The righteous shall never  
be removed: but the wicked  
shall not inhabit the earth.
- 31 The mouth of the just  
bringeth forth wisdom: but the  
froward tongue shall be cut out.
- 32 The lips of the righteous  
know what is acceptable: but  
the mouth of the wicked *speak-  
eth* frowardness.

## LECTURE 1027.

*The righteous happy, the wicked miserable.*

The rich are apt to regard wealth as their "strong city," and the poor are apt to consider that their poverty is their destruction. But it is godliness that is great riches, as the apostle says; see 1 Tim. 6. 6; and in like manner it is wickedness that is the worst of ruin. "The labour of the righteous," whether rich or poor, "tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin." They may have the same amount of means and yet the one shall be serving God and the other mammon, the one laying up treasure in heaven, and the other heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. The one by keeping instruction is "in the way of life." The other refusing reproof is led astray and lost. Their words also, and the tenour of their conversation, are widely different. For whilst "the tongue of the just is as choice silver," not lavish of words,

but saying that which is of weight and value, the foolish and wicked person is a dissembler with his tongue, or a slanderer, or given to much speaking, and so is often tempted to speak amiss when he talks for talking sake; his heart being "little worth," and his words, which come out of the abundance of the heart, being consequently worthless.

These reflexions are now put before us in various lights, in order to impress us in the most lively manner with this important truth, that it is not the being rich or poor, but the being righteous or wicked, that will make all the difference between our being happy or miserable. See how much good a good man does even with his words; they are food to many, comforting the sorrowful, strengthening the weak, and refreshing the weary, whilst the foolish and wicked not only are of no use to others but perish themselves. And observe this distinctive mark set upon the riches which God gives unto the righteous; "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." A signal blessing, experienced in the holy happy peace of mind with which many enjoy thankfully God's good gifts of plenty and prosperity on earth, whilst others are made rich only to be made more wretched than before, more subject to their own ungovernable passions, more proud, covetous, selfish, sensual, irritable, and discontented.

Again, the foolish person delights in doing harm, but the man of understanding has his pleasure in wisdom. The wicked fear, and their fears are realized; whilst the righteous have their holy desires fulfilled. And how soon does the end come! This is one of the things that prove wickedness to be foolishness; "as the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." The wicked is a slothful servant of the Lord, and is abomination unto Him who here sets him his employment. His unprofitable years are oftentimes cut short; whilst they that fear the Lord have their days prolonged. In the case of the wicked, their expectation is doomed to perish, their end is destruction, their time is short, their mouth is froward, and their tongue fit only to be cut out. Whilst the righteous have hope, and have joy in hoping, and find divine strength given them, as they walk in the way of the Lord. They never die, for death is in their case the gate of everlasting life. And as they profit by the knowledge of what is good themselves, they speak to others "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Eph. 4. 29. Happy is the language of their lips. Happy are the thoughts of their hearts. Happy are their employments for the present, happy their expectations for the future. God grant that we may both live the life and die the death of the righteous! God in mercy move the hearts of the wicked to repent, and to amend, that they may be saved!



*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

- 1 A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.
- 2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.
- 3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.
- 4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.
- 5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
- 6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.
- 7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.
- 8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.
- 9 An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.
- 10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.
- 11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.
- 12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.
- 13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.
- 14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.
- 15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.
- 16 A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.

## LECTURE 1028.

*The force of contrast as employed in the Proverbs.*

All deceitfulness in our dealings is wicked. This is forcibly expressed by the proverb, "A false balance is abomination to the Lord." And perhaps this instance of injustice is especially hateful in God's sight, because the wrong is done under pretence of doing that which is fair and just, "When pride cometh then cometh shame:" this proverb prepares us to understand, that "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased." Luke 14. 11. And each of these assertions is corroborated by the statement of a corresponding truth; "a just weight is his delight," and again, "with the lowly is wisdom." And this method is adopted in nearly all the proverbs; one part is made a sort of echo to the other, and this often greatly helps to make the meaning clear, as well as serving to impress it on the heart.

Thus in the proverbs following, the fruit of "the integrity of the upright" is contrasted with that of the "perverseness of trans-

gressors." The vanity of riches in the day of wrath is put in so much the more striking light by mention of the effect of righteousness in delivering from death. And how this happens is explained in like manner; namely, "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." And again, "The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness." In each case the conduct pursued is made to lead to the good or evil consequences assigned to it; God having so constituted his creatures, that their obedience in the main tends to their happiness, and their disobedience to their misery. And even where the contrary may seem to be the case, it is but during the short period of this transitory life. Death extinguishes the hopes of the wicked. And when the sufferings of the righteous are brought happily to an end, then they who in their lifetime have received their good things suffer in their turn, and suffer everlastingly.

The same kind of contrast may be observed in the proverbs following: "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered;" the wickedness of the one injuring his neighbours, the wisdom of the other benefitting himself. Again, "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth;" such is the regard in which a good man is held; "and when the wicked perish there is shouting," so far are they from being honoured or regretted. Again, "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted;" so greatly their prayers avail; "but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked," so mischievous is an evil tongue, so apt to provoke the wrath of man, as well as likely to incur the displeasure of the Lord. Again, "He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace;" the one not only despising in his heart, but giving utterance to his scornful thoughts, the other, not only not speaking scornfully, but also not thinking haughtily. Again, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter;" the one prompted by vanity to shew whatsoever he knows, the other content to keep his knowledge to himself, whatever credit he might get by divulging it abroad. In like manner the value of good advice is shewn by two opposite considerations, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." And so also the risk of suretiship is pointed out, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure." Whilst the watchful anxiety of a right minded woman, to avoid the slightest blemish of her character, is described, by comparing it with the resolution of the mighty to retain their goods and possessions. From all which several reflexions may we have grace to collect heavenly wisdom, learning to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul : but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh.

18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work : but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward.

19 As righteousness *tendeth* to life : so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death.

20 They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the LORD : but *such as are* upright in *their way* *are* his delight.

21 *Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished : but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

22 *As* a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, *so is* a fair woman which is without discretion.

23 The desire of the righteous *is* only good : but the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and *there is*

that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat : and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him : but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth it.

27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour : but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall : but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind : and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

30 The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life ; and he that winneth souls *is* wise.

31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth : much more the wicked and the sinner.

## LECTURE 1029.

*The retribution of the good and of the evil.*

"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul." And so our Lord declares, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." May we remember this when we have occasion to shew kindness to each other ; may we escape the lot of the cruel man, who "troubleth his own flesh !" May we also shrink from all approach to the deceitfulness of the wicked, and endeavour as here suggested to sow righteousness ; remembering the assurance of S. Paul, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap !" Gal. 6. 7. May we pursue that righteousness which "tendeth to life," instead of that evil the fruit of which is death ! for so the apostle also teaches us, that death came by sin, see Rom. 5. 12, and leads us to hope "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 5. 21.

"A froward heart," mentioned in the next proverb, means a morose discontented proud and obstinate disposition. When we



read of persons thus disposed that they are "abomination to the Lord," whilst "such as are upright in their way are his delight," this may remind us of S. Peter's words, that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. 1 Pet. 3. 12. When we find that no combination amongst the wicked can prevent their being punished, we may think of the end which befel those in the Book of Revelation, who were opposed to the King of kings; they "were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Rev. 19. 20. And what a dreadful end is that! In what a different aspect would things appear to us, if we had an eye to the judgment of the last day! Little should we then reckon of beauty without the grace of godly wisdom. Little should we heed the present seeming peace and joyfulness of those who have only wrath to expect hereafter. They who most bountifully spend their means in doing good would then be esteemed the richest; seeing, that they are laying up treasure in heaven. But he who withholds that which he ought to give, or refuses to sell in due season that which is needful for the food of others, not only is exposed to the curses of the people, but also provokes the displeasure of the Lord. Thus do his ill hoarded riches tend to poverty. Thus does the harm which he would inflict on others fall upon himself. Thus does his trusting in his riches prove his ruin. And thus on the other hand is it true of the bountiful, that he at once "scattereth and yet increaseth," "watereth," and is "watered also himself."

In the case of the Israelites, a retribution of this kind was sure to take place manifestly on earth, under the special sovereignty of Jehovah their King. And with us also, in the times of the gospel, we find it usually hold good, that the bountiful are blest with prosperity, the niggardly suffer frequent loss, those that trouble their own families gain nothing by it, and the wise have the advantage of the foolish, the diligent and frugal of the slothful and the wasteful. But much more important is this truth as applicable to our eternal lot, to the wisdom of saving our souls, and of winning if possible the souls of others. The good may indeed be recompensed even upon the earth for their good conduct; marvellous as it is that they should be so, considering that the best of men have no merits to plead, and have many sins to confess. On earth the good may be recompensed, and much more than the wicked. In heaven the righteous may be saved; though "scarcely," as S. Peter writes, referring to this passage of the Proverbs, "scarcely," or with difficulty, and almost beyond what they would venture to expect for themselves. "Where," we would then ask with the same apostle, where, in the day of eternal retribution, "where, shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. 4. 18.

*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

- 1 Whoso loveth instruction the righteous shall stand.  
loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.
- 2 A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.
- 3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.
- 4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.
- 5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.
- 6 The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.
- 7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of
- 8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.
- 9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.
- 10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.
- 11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.
- 12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.
- 13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

## LECTURE 1030.

*That many profitable lessons are plainly taught in this book.*

Considering that proverbs are usually expressed in the fewest possible words, and that these before us were written ages ago, in a language which has long since ceased to be spoken, it is wonderful that we do not find them more obscure than they are. We might expect to have to pass over many, as not admitting in the present time of any plain or profitable interpretation. Let us thank God, that, on the contrary, this portion of his word, however appropriate at the first for the people of a distant time and country, is still serviceable to the Christian church, still gives us many striking admonitions, and supplies us with many profitable rules for our direction in serving and pleasing Him.

From the proverbs now before us we may learn the advantage of loving to be taught, and the unreasonableness of hating to be reprimand. We may observe how good conduct obtains God's blessing, and how wicked devices provoke his condemnation. We may take warning as to the instability of the wicked, and may be encouraged to hope for the perseverance of the righteous. We may be impressed with the value of a virtuous woman to her husband, and of the evil of one who puts him to shame. We may

see how the righteous and the wicked differ, not only in their works, but in the thoughts of their hearts, and in the words of their mouths; and further we may see how different is the end of each respectively, to be established and to be commended being the lot of the righteous, to be overthrown and to be despised being that of the wicked. But to what purpose shall we know these things unless we apply them to our practice? How little shall we feel interest in these proverbs, unless there be in our own hearts and lives something answering to the better part which is here described, unless we can truly reflect within ourselves as we hear these lively descriptions, God be praised that we have chosen the right path; or at the least can pray heartily unto God, God give us grace to choose it!

We now come to a proverb of uncertain interpretation: "He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself and lacketh bread." It may probably mean, that neither the esteem of others, nor a man's own good opinion of himself, will compensate for the lack of the necessities of life. And if so, it may lead us to reflect, of how little avail is the regard of others, or a man's own self esteem, where he is lacking in the one thing really needful, a faith that works by love. But if this one proverb be obscure, those which follow teach us plainly, that the humane temper of a righteous man extends even to brute creatures; whilst "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," their virtues in general being vices in disguise; and again, that diligence is the way to plenty, and fondness for evil company a proof of foolishness; and again, that the wicked have a desire to be ensnared in wickedness, and according to their desire so does it befall them; whilst the holy desires of the righteous bring forth good fruit, and even if they fall into sin, the worst of trouble, they are graciously raised up again by the Lord.

O God, give us then wisdom to know and feel the inestimable privilege of being counted as righteous in thy sight, and being privileged to account ourselves as dead indeed unto sin but alive unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. See Rom. 6. 11.



*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

1. A man shall be satisfied with fruit in the fruit of his mouth: and the recompense of a man: labour shall be rewarded unto him.

2. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

3. A fool's wrath is immediately kindled: but a prudent man represseth himself.

4. In the mouth of the righteous is found wisdom: but a liar's tongue is deceit.

5. There is that seedeth like the seedings of a sower: but he sows the seed of the wise is precious.

6. The joy of him shall be established for ever: but a young tongue is but for a moment.

7. Peace is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but in the counsels of peace is joy.

8. There shall no evil happen

to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

9. Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.

10. A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools revealeth foolishness.

11. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

12. Heartiness in the heart of man maketh it steep: but a good word maketh it glad.

13. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

14. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

15. Is the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

**LECTURE 1631.**

*The importance of a right conversation.*

MANY of these proverbs, and indeed many throughout the book, relate to the fruit of the lips: as we find also in the New Testament, that a great part of the whole Epistle of S. James is devoted to teaching us the right government of the tongue. Nor shall we wonder at this, if we consider how continually words of some sort are in our mouths. Now continually we have occasion either to give forth in a right conversation, or to manifest our unworthiness in evil, by vanity and wicked speech. Let it not be thought that such words are of slight account as compared with actions; for that because they seem to be but breath, they can do neither good nor harm. This might be true if good and harm were to be reckoned without regard to consequences. But see what great consequences often follow from a few words. And consider how surely the language of the lips manifests whether they be governed in the heart. And remember that this is the very highest object of our calling, to glorify God. And there will then be no cause for being surprised when told, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." *Matt. 12. 37.*

The statements on this subject now before us are these, that "a man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth," as well as recompensed for the work of his hands; that it is folly to give utterance to anger, and that it is wisdom to be silent where speech would expose to shame; that speaking the truth is one way to manifest righteousness, whereas false witness is one way of practising deceit; that the language of some men wounds like a sword, whilst others have healing on their lips; that truth never fails, but falsehood is soon found out and brought to nothing; that lying lips are hateful unto God, and they that deal truly are his delight; and that it is a sign of prudence to know when to be silent, and a sign of folly to speak much, and so expose a man's own foolishness. And these, let us remember, are not mere worldly maxims, but counsels of divine wisdom. And the fruit of our giving heed to them and obeying them, is not merely our present reputation for prudence and for self command, but our eternal honour. Oh let us then practise the spirit of these precepts in regard to God's own blessed word. Let us listen reverently to Him, instead of hastening to answer, or venturing to dispute. And as we study the sacred Scriptures, let us lift up our hearts in prayer to God, and say to Him, as Eli bade Samuel say of old, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." 1 Sam. 3. 9.

Wise is he "that hearkeneth unto counsel;" especially to the counsel of the Most High. Whereas it is a fool whose way "is right in his own eyes." It is foolishness to shut our ears to good advice, and above all to the good advice of our heavenly Father. Let us then lay to heart the warnings which He gives us here not only against the sins of the tongue, but also against deceitfulness in the heart, and against slothfulness in the hands. Let us be encouraged to persevere in well doing by his gracious assurance here given us that righteousness is the highest excellency of man, and that "in the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." Not that the best of men are exempted from the lot of our common mortality. Not that they do not die, but that their death is gain. They do not die eternally. They cease to breathe on earth, but at the same moment they enter into a state of being far better than the best of life on earth, they depart and are with Christ, they sleep in Jesus; and when their earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, they enter into possession of "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

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 2. The second step is to gather information and resources.
 3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy.
 4. The fourth step is to implement the plan.
 5. The fifth step is to evaluate the results and make adjustments.

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DOPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, ARMY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20315

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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the situation.

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There is a vast difference between the book of Job and a large collection of moral maxims. We may perhaps feel some surprise at finding an extreme instance of the natural tendency to do that which is greatest and of our absolute dependence on the grace of God. We may perhaps long to be refreshed by the way with some assurance of the great things of the Gospel, things of a righteousness not our own, but received ones by faith, tidings of strength for struggles that ours perfected in our weakness. But we do not see the difference between our case as Christians, and the case of those who lived before the birth of Christ. See how truly Christ our Saviour has brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. See how he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest, wiser than the wisest, of those who lived under the dispensation of the Law. And in reading the things required of man by the just Judge of all the earth, let us reflect with thankfulness on that which Christ has done in our behalf, on God's great mercy in accepting us as righteous for Christ's sake, and on God's great gift, the gift of the Spirit, whereby He enables us to do his will.

**Our fathers under the Old Testament had but a glimpse of**



these things by type and prophecy, as compared with the revelation which we enjoy. The book of Proverbs, as they read it, whilst it gave them the same instruction as it gives us in regard to what is right and wrong, must have been apt to depress their minds with the conviction, that the wisdom here described is unattainable. The Christian, with the Gospel for his ground of hope, feels emboldened to take even the hardest sayings of Scripture, in regard to practical holiness, for his rule of life, for the standard of his daily walk and conversation. Thy grace is sufficient for me, he says within himself to God; thy mercy can cover all my sins, and though they were as scarlet make them white as snow. Thy power, the power of the Holy Spirit of God, can purify all the corrupt propensities of my heart, can rectify my erring judgment, can strengthen my feeble hands, can give me courage to attempt, and success in attempting, to do all that in thy word is set before me to be done.

Let not then the words before us merely serve to convince us of sin. Let them not merely lead us to assent, that it would indeed be well, for children to obey their parents, and for man to guide his lips with discretion, and to be diligent, and to abhor falsehood, and to be bountiful in the expenditure of riches, even though they avail to ransom life; let us not merely own in sorrow that all this is true, but also joyfully feel that all this by God's grace is practicable. Scornfulness, and violence, sloth, and falsehood, covetousness, pride, and opposition to God's word, may be repented of, forgiven, renounced, put away, and utterly abhorred: and the graces which are the very opposite may be established instead of them. Yes, holiness in this life is attainable, and heaven in the life which is to come. Happiness both here and hereafter is by God's great mercy ours. And instead of pining in the sickness of hope deferred, we are brought to feel that the time is short, and the day at hand; we are persuaded that thousands of years bear no proportion to eternity; and we are taught ever to be watching and looking, each year, each day, each hour of our lives, for the end of time, and for the coming of our Lord, and for the reward which He will then surely give to them that now glorify his name.

Heavenly Father, help us, we beseech Thee, to set our hearts on fulfilling all thy pleasure. Heavenly Father, help us, we beseech Thee, to fulfil it all. Help us by the help of thy Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



eth reproof shall be honoured;" his listening to advice even when it amounts to finding fault with himself, is to his honour, and ought to be so esteemed; for it proves him both wise and humble minded. The foolish on the other hand shew their foolishness by hating to depart from evil. They rejoice in accomplishing their desires, and cling to the forbidden indulgence of their lusts; and they are apt to esteem those for their enemies who tell them the unwelcome truth that the end of these things is death. But to such we may well say with St. Paul, "Am I therefore your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Gal. 4. 16. Nay, we may add, rather I am your friend in so doing. For you must know the truth in order to obey it. And it is only by obeying the truth that you can enjoy real happiness for ever.

Bad company is a way that leads many into bad practices. And they who are in the habit of doing evil are apt to choose for their companions those who are like minded with themselves. How awful is the thought that such as these must keep company together to all eternity in flames of endless fire! And as we find that the society of the wise and good here ministers to our growth in wisdom and in goodness, how delightful is it to look forward to a heavenly state of being, in which we shall be united with all the wise and good of all mankind in praising God for ever! When the evil which is now pursuing sinners overtakes them, God forbid that we should be found in the number of their company! When good shall be repaid to the righteous, God grant that we may be reckoned amongst those, who being counted righteous for the sake of Christ, have constantly endeavoured to be that which God vouchsafes to reckon us, that which He helps us really to become, holy in heart and life!

And what an inheritance is this, which a good man leaves to his children's children; not merely his wealth, the fruit of that diligence and skill, which render the "tillage of the poor" productive of abundance; not merely the wealth of sinners, which owing to their idleness and wastefulness may be said to be "laid up for the just;" but the fruit of his prayers, and of his precepts, the benefit of a religious training, and the blessedness of being admitted to partake of inestimable religious privileges. In the education of his offspring he spares not to use the rod, for this would be indulging his own feelings at the risk of injury to the character of his children. He applies in good time the needful chastisement; hoping to prevent much future misery by a little present pain, and knowing that this is God's method of dealing with those whom best He loves, to chastise them in this life, with a view to their eternal happiness. And however little he may have to leave them in amount of worldly goods, if he teaches them to be contented with such things as they have, he leaves them far wealthier than those, who having little want much, or having much want more, and who whether poor or rich are discontented.



*Proverbs relating to the wise and foolish.*

- Every wise woman buildeth her habitation with his joy.  
 but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.  
 1 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord:  
 but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.  
 2 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of justice: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.  
 3 Where no oxen are the crib is empty: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.  
 4 A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.  
 5 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.  
 6 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.  
 7 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.  
 8 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.  
 9 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth
- not intermeddle with his joy.  
 10 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.  
 11 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.  
 12 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.  
 13 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.  
 14 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.  
 15 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.  
 16 He that is soon angry deal-eth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.  
 17 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.  
 18 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

LECTURE 1034.

*The ways of the wise and of the foolish.*

A wise woman is commended as building her house, making it more fit for the habitation of her family; "but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands," that is to say, lets it go to ruin by her folly. It is the character of the upright man to fear the Lord; whilst the perverse venture to despise their Maker. Their folly also often leads them to give vent to their pride in the language of their lips. "But the lips of the wise shall preserve them." For so has our Lord also declared, "by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. 12. 37. The next proverb refers to the use of oxen in husbandry, and seems to mean that though they may give trouble, yet their labour is conducive to the increase of the crop. And

thus it teaches us that we ought not to grudge trouble for the present, if we may thereby attain to abundance at the last. Neither ought we to shrink from encountering persecution when called upon to witness to the truth. For if by our words we shall be condemned, what words will more surely rise up in the judgment against us than those which are false?

But these proverbs for the most part refer to wisdom and to foolishness, meaning wisdom in regard to right and wrong, in regard to God and his will on the one hand, and on the other to sin and its shortlived enjoyment. It is in vain that a scorner seeks wisdom such as this. We must first understand aright in part, and we shall then easily know more; even as our Lord declares, "whosoever bath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." Matt. 13. 12. It is in vain also to offer to the scorner instruction in divine things. For this seems to be that which our Lord describes as casting pearls before swine. See Matt. 7. 6. The wise shew their wisdom in understanding their way, knowing the consequences of the things they do. Fools shew their foolishness in falsehood, attempting to deceive others, but most of all deceiving their own selves. And yet further do they manifest folly in making a mock at sin; sin which wrings tears of contrition from the penitent, sin which cost the precious life of Christ. Oh how bitter in the secrecy of the heart are the sorrows of the contrite sinner! Oh how unknown to others is the joy of him whose sins are forgiven! Far be it from us to remain impenitent in the house of the wicked devoted to destruction! Far be from us the folly of choosing a way that seems right in our own eyes, whilst in reality it leads to death! Far be from us the laughter which conceals anguish, the present mirth which soon must be exchanged for misery everlasting! Far be from us the ways of "the backslider in heart," the ways with which he is filled to his own ruin, whilst "the good man" through God's grace derives from his, peace, and joy, and glory!

It is a part of foolishness to be credulous, to listen to the false suggestions of Satan: "but the prudent man looketh well to his going." It is a part of wisdom to be cautious, and avoid the risk of temptation; "but the fool rageth, and is confident." He is angry with those who advise him to be cautious; and being angry he acts rashly, and fares ill accordingly. Whilst others who with less heat of temper frame "wicked devices" are generally hated. In either case the simple have for their inheritance the fruit of their folly, whilst "the prudent are crowned with knowledge," find in it their reward and ornament. And if it fare so much better with the good than with the wicked even in this present world, how much more in the world which is to come!

*Proverbs relating to wisdom and righteousness.*

- 20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour : but the rich *hath* many friends.
- 21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth : but he that hath mercy on the poor happy is he.
- 22 Do they not err that devise evil ? but mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good.
- 23 In all labour there is profit : but the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.
- 24 The crown of the wise is their riches : *but* the foolishness of fools is folly.
- 25 A true witness delivereth souls : but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.
- 26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence : and his children shall have a place of refuge.
- 27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.
- 28 In the multitude of people is the king's honour : but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.
- 29 *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding* : but *he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*
- 30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh : but envy the rottenness of the bones.
- 31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker : but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.
- 32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness : but the righteous hath hope in his death.
- 33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding : but *that which is* in the midst of fools is made known.
- 34 Righteousness exalteth a nation : but sin is a reproach to any people.
- 35 The king's favour is toward a wise servant : but his wrath is *against* him that causeth shame.

## LECTURE 1035.

*National religion the way to national prosperity.*

It is here admitted to be generally true, that the poor are unkindly treated, whilst "the rich have many friends." But it is added most instructively, "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth : but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." May we ever be saved from thus devising evil ! May we ever share the mercy and truth which await those who devise good ! But we must not only devise good, not only speak of doing it ; we must actually do it. Otherwise we look in vain for the reward of well doing. For as it is in this world's goods, that talking without doing earns nothing ; so shall we find it in regard to the world which is to come ; even so as our blessed Lord has said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7. 21.

Where it is said that "the crown of the wise is their riches," this must mean that they so use them to God's glory, as to redound to their own advantage. "But the foolishness of fools is folly ;"



which may perhaps mean, that if they have riches, their foolishness is only so much the more largely made manifest. When it is next said that "a true witness delivereth souls," this is probably spoken of saving the life of persons accused; though we may well apply the words to Him who in the book of Revelation is called "the faithful and true witness," Rev. 3. 14, and who is the Saviour both of soul and body. Whilst the deceitful witness speaking lies may remind us of the great accuser of our brethren, who is "a liar, and the father of it." John 8. 44. Our way to have strong confidence, both in regard to this our enemy and in respect of all other dangers is to fear the Lord. It is by being his children that we are secure of a place of refuge. It is in cherishing the reverential fear of our heavenly Father that we find "a fountain of life," and are removed out of the reach of "the snares of death."

The honour and the strength of princes depending on the multitude of their people, are thereby shewn to be dependent on the blessing of God; through whose almighty word and power it comes to pass that his creatures increase and multiply. The praise of a great understanding is given to him who is slow to wrath; whilst a hasty temper is set down to the account of weakness of mind. As a sound heart, that is to say, a kind and cheerful temper, is the source of health and activity throughout the body, so is a malignant spirit the cause of disease and decay of health. "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker," whose ordinance it was of old, "the poor shall never cease out of the land." Deut. 15. 11. "But he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor." Yes, and so also our Lord has said, that He will declare from the throne of judgment, to those who feed the hungry and clothe the naked, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matth. 25. 40.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness;" that is to say, driven away from life, to death and to misery ever after. "But the righteous hath hope in his death;" a clear and instructive acknowledgment of a life and judgment to come. "Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding," that is to say, it is discreetly cherished in silence, though on due occasions it is freely published abroad. "But that which is in the midst of fools is made known;" they being unable to keep their own counsel. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," national religion is the way to national prosperity. "But sin is a reproach to any people." However great may be their wealth, power, wisdom, glory, sin covers all with shame. They therefore who bear rule ought always to shew favour to their servants when gifted with wisdom in divine things, and to discountenance those who are noted for their sins. But whatsoever may be the policy of earthly kings, we may be sure that He who reigns above will shew favour to the righteous, and indignation to them who dishonour Him.

*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

- 1 A soft answer turneth away wrath : but grievous words stir up anger.
- 2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright : but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.
- 3 The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good.
- 4 A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life : but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.
- 5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction : but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.
- 6 In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure : but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.
- 7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge : but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.
- 8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD : but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.
- 9 The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD : but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.
- 10 Correction *is* grievous unto him that forsaketh the way : *and* he that hateth reproof shall die.
- 11 Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD : how much more then the hearts of the children of men ?
- 12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him : neither will he go unto the wise.
- 13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance : but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.
- 14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge : but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.
- 15 All the days of the afflicted *are* evil : but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.
- 16 Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure and trouble therewith.
- 17 Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.
- 18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife : but *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife.

## LECTURE 1036.

*Of temper. Of instruction. Of the omniscience of God.*

There is little connexion between one proverb and another in this book, except so far as this, that they all refer to the great distinction between the righteous and the wicked, the wise and the foolish. This renders it the harder to remember or explain them in the order in which they stand. And we may sometimes more profitably treat of them, by sorting them according to their subjects. In the passage before us, let us therefore first give heed to those which relate to good and evil temper. An important consideration ; one which greatly affects the peace of each man's mind, the happiness of each family and neighbourhood, the unity of states, the unity of churches, the peaceable agreement of the whole race of mankind. Much herein depends upon the government of the tongue. For whilst "grievous words stir up strife," it is surely true, that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." A wholesome tongue, a tongue governed by sound

principles and giving utterance to wholesome words, "is a tree of life," prevents those bitter and deadly animosities which flow from "perverseness therein." A good temper also forwards a man's own cheerfulness, helps him to have "a merry heart," and "a cheerful countenance," breaks the force of many a deep mortification, and yields to its possessor "a continual feast." And, behold, what happiness it ministers to all around! How much better is the most frugal fare where kindness prevails, than the most sumptuous feast with animosity! And where love towards each other springs from piety towards God, how much happier are the poor who thus dwell at peace, than they who have "great treasure and trouble therewith."

Besides promoting good temper, the tongue may also largely help to the diffusion of right understanding. "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." Again, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so." They have it not in their hearts so to do. Neither do they like to receive instruction, nor bear to submit to reproof. For "A fool despiseth his father's instruction." And again, "Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way." And again, "A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise." And once more, the difference between the wise and the foolish in this point is thus forcibly set forth: "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness."

The remaining proverbs in this passage may be considered as uniting to teach us how surely God sees every thing, and rejoices in beholding that which is good, and abhors the sight of evil. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." Let us not then ever think that we can do any thing in secret. In the most private place, and in the darkest hour, the eye of the Almighty is upon us. Though we were as far off from Him as the nethermost hell, even there would He behold all our doings, and not only our doings but also our thoughts, our very hearts being all open before Him. He sees us. He discerns our conduct and our motives. He "knoweth," as the apostle writes, "them that are his." 2 Tim. 2. 19. He satisfies their wants. His ears are open to their prayers, He regards them with his most gracious love. Whilst the wicked, even if they have abundance have trouble with it, not contentment. Their way is abomination unto the Lord. And even their sacrifice, those actions which they mean to be of a religious nature, being seen by Him to be no more than mere formality are hateful in his sight. Oh that He may see in us devotion of the soul! Oh that we, remembering that "God is a spirit," may watch that we always worship Him "in spirit and in truth!" John 4. 24.



*Proverbs relating to the righteous and the wicked.*

19 The way of the slothful *ed are* an abomination to the man *is* as an hedge of thorns: LORD: but *the words* of the but the way of the righteous *is* pure *are* pleasant words. made plain.

20 A wise son maketh a glad troubleth his own house; but father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. he that hateth gifts shall live.

21 Folly *is* joy to *him that is* studieth to answer: but a man destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh up- out evil things. rightly.

22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established. 29 The LORD *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!* 30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.

24 The way of life *is* above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. 31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.

25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will that heareth reproof getteth understanding.

26 The thoughts of the wicked 33 The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

## LECTURE 1037.

*Of being humble, pure, and not covetous.*

Let us first attend to the two proverbs which mention "the way of the slothful," "the way of the righteous," and "the way of life" "to the wise." "The way of the slothful is as an hedge of thorns." That is to say, they make little or no progress. For want of diligence they find all labour hard, all study difficult. "But the way of the righteous is made plain;" God revealing it unto them. "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." The wise and the righteous are the same. The wise are they who have heavenly wisdom. The righteous are they who do righteousness. See 1 John 3. 7. And we know that we, as Christians, cannot acceptably do this, unless first we be righteous in another sense, justified through faith in Christ. But when we are both justified freely by grace, and also sanctified by the Spirit of God, then we "depart from hell beneath," and the way is clear before us to life eternal in the heavens.

When in a son yields gladness to a father; even God, as we

believe, takes pleasure when his children make progress in the knowledge of divine things. But a foolish man is a grief to his parents, nor does he refrain from treating them with scorn. Such an one delights in his foolishness; whilst "a man of understanding walketh uprightly," and is found to take pleasure also in so doing. It is well to avail ourselves of the wisdom of others by giving heed to their advice. And whilst they take pleasure in giving us the guidance of their counsel, how seasonable, how profitable it oftentimes is to us! A good man will spare no pains in helping us by good counsel; "but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things," their counsel would only lead us astray. Doubtless it is more agreeable to make a fair show unto each other, it rejoices the heart much more, than to confess our faults one to another, and to request advice. Doubtless it is more welcome to our vanity and pride to have a good report among men, than to own that we deserve no such thing. But still it is the part of wisdom to give ear to reproof, such reproof as aims at our eternal welfare. To refuse it is to despise one's own soul. To listen to it is our way to get understanding. To listen to it in the fear of the Lord, in a teachable humble spirit, is our way to be exalted higher than any praise of man can lift us up; for "before honour is humility."

"The Lord will destroy the house of the proud." Here we see that humility is before honour in respect to God's blessing in this present world. "But he will establish the border of the widow." A widow, being in the most desolate condition possible, may be justly expected to be humbled; and is here probably set for any one in general who is thoroughly humble in heart. The pure too are objects of God's favourable regard, and their words are pleasant in his ears. His blessing attends those who would reject a bribe, whilst the covetous fall under his displeasure. And He hears the prayer of the righteous; but as to the wicked, He puts them afar off. Are we then wicked or are we righteous? are we proud, impure, covetous; or are we the reverse? Let us remember that on these things it depends whether we are an abomination in the sight of God, or accepted before Him in the Beloved; on these things it depends whether we are lost for ever, or dwell with God in heaven to all eternity.

*Proverbs relating to the Lord and to kings.*

- 1 The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.
- 2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.
- 3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.
- 4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.
- 5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.
- 6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.
- 7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.
- 8 Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.
- 9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.
- 10 A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.
- 11 A just weight and balance are the LORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work.
- 12 It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.
- 13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.
- 14 The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.
- 15 In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.
- 16 How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver?
- 17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

## LECTURE 1038.

*Of the judgment awaiting us hereafter.*

We are apt to attribute too much importance to ourselves, and to consider ourselves much more independent than we are of the all knowing and ever present God. Some of the earlier proverbs in this chapter seem designed to correct our erring notions on this important point. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." He gives us the power of thinking, of feeling and of speaking. It is by his gift that "a man's heart deviseth his way." Free as a man may feel himself in the exercise of this gift, "the Lord directeth his steps." And clean as a man's ways may be "in his own eyes," they have a very different aspect in the eyes of Him who "weigheth the spirits." Let us therefore commit our doings unto Him who is the Author of every good thought and work, — and we may reckon on enjoying his blessing. Let us be assured



that He made us not for our own glory but for his; even the wicked being doomed to fulfil his righteous will in their everlasting punishment. And let us renounce that pride of heart which "is an abomination to the Lord," remembering that "though hand join in hand," he who so offends God "shall not be unpunished."

Whilst however we humbly own the presiding hand of God in every thing, we must be aware that He is in no wise the author of sin. There is a wide difference between man as he was made at the first, and man as he has made himself by his iniquities. And though it may be justly considered that in God we live and move and have our being, still our transgressions are altogether our own. And whilst it is only by God's mercy and God's truth that iniquity is purged, yet in us must be implanted the fear of the Lord, in order for us to depart from evil. All is from God; and it is of his ordinance, that man shall be responsible for evil, and susceptible of good; liable to incur God's displeasure, and also capable of pleasing Him. And behold, though it is only by his own assistance that our ways can be pleasing in his sight, behold how great is our reward. He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us. He makes righteousness though accompanied with poverty better "than great revenues without right." "To get wisdom," the wisdom of pleasing Him, is better than gold. And they who walk in the path of righteousness, laid down by Him, attain to the salvation of the soul.

The proverbs in this passage relating to kings speak of them as God's ordinance for the good of their subjects. In their administration of justice more especially they ought to imitate the pattern set them by Him to whom belong "a just weight and balance." Their wrath ought to be directed against evil doers. And the light of the "king's countenance" ought to shine with favour upon those who are disposed to do well. Thus the sovereignty of a man among his brethren would be fit to remind us of our King eternal in the heavens. And the solemn administration of justice, by an earthly sovereign, would prepare us the better to understand how we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, how terrible will then be the breath of his displeasure, how much to be desired his kind regard. Let us thank God that He who then will judge us is now our Advocate, our Surety, our Intercessor, our atoning Sacrifice: in one word our Saviour. But let us, at the same time be aware, that the reason for calling Him by a name signifying Saviour is this, "for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1. 21.

*Proverbs relating to various subjects.*

18 Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

19 Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good : and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.

21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent : and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

22 Understanding *is* a well-spring of life unto him that hath it : but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

23 The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

24 Pleasant words *are as* an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end

thereof *are* the ways of death.

26 He that laboureth labour-eth for himself ; for his mouth craveth it of him.

27 An ungodly man diggeth up evil : and in his lips *there is* as a burning fire.

28 A froward man soweth strife : and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

29 A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way *that is* not good.

30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things : moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

31 The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness.

32 *He that is* slow to anger *is* better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

33 The lot *is* cast into the lap ; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.

## LECTURE 1039.

*The fruit of humility towards God.*

That "Pride goeth before destruction" is true not only in respect of our pride with one another, but much more of our pride towards God. Thus it is written by the prophet Habakkuk, "Behold, his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the just shall live by faith." Hab. 2. 4. Pride prompts us to trust in our own works, to desire that we may have eternal life in virtue of our own good deeds. And we need to be humbled in order to believe that we are justified freely by God's grace through faith which is in Christ Jesus. See Rom. 3. 24. But when we are thus humbled, and trust in God, then we become truly wise, truly exalted, truly happy. Our hearts are opened to understand wisdom, and our lips to recommend it to our brethren. We find it a well spring of life unto ourselves ; and we are animated with a holy desire to render it available to all around us. But here let us beware lest pride again find footing. When we are prompted to try to edify one another, let it be done in no vain conceit that we are wiser and better than they. Let a right view of our iniquity before God, a deep sense of how much we are in-

debted to God's free grace for our own privileges, keep us so humble in regard to God, that we shew ourselves lowly and meek in all our walk and conversation.

The danger of following our own devices instead of walking in the ways of God is forcibly set before us in this proverb: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." And in the two which follow we are taught, that as the labourer digs for his daily bread, so the ungodly man works for a recompence of evil, and his words produce mischief to himself and others. "He that laboreth laboreth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him. An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire." Some particulars of the mischief which he is apt to do are next set forth. "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." Here is one way in which the lips of the ungodly are as a burning fire. Next follows another way: "A violent man enticeth his neighbour and leadeth him into a way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass." The shutting the eyes seems to mean how intent the thoughts are in planning evil. It may further serve to signify how wilfully blind that man must be, who knowing that he has his own many sins to answer for, makes himself guilty of the sins of others by designedly enticing them to transgress.

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." Yes, for then it may be regarded as betokening that a man cannot be far off from the enjoyment of rest in Jesus, cannot fail of receiving the crown of glory that fadeth not away. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." For many who have conquered others have been unable to subdue themselves. And whilst the gain in the one instance is but temporal, in the other it is eternal. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." The lot was used not only under the Law, to divide lands, see Num. 26. 55, to decide upon the scape goat, see Lev. 16. 8, and to discover a criminal, see Josh. 7. 14, but also under the dispensation of the Gospel, in the choice of an apostle to replace the traitor Judas. See Acts 1. 26. On such occasions it was used with prayer to God that He would dispose of it aright. Let us never attempt to employ it, except where we can feel justified in praying unto God, that He would be pleased to direct the issue according to his will.



*Proverbs on various subjects.*

- 1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.
- 2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.
- 3 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold : but the LORD trieth the hearts.
- 4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips ; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.
- 5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker : and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.
- 6 Children's children are the crown of old men ; and the glory of children are their fathers.
- 7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool : much less do lying lips a prince.
- 8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it : whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.
- 9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love ; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.
- 10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.
- 11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion : therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.
- 12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.
- 13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

## LECTURE 1040.

*Against returning evil for good unto God.*

"An house full of sacrifices" means an house full of the flesh of creatures offered in sacrifice. But however great the plenty, if with it there be strife, "a dry morsel and quietness therewith" is far better. How much better too must wisdom be than folly, if "a wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren !" When God's first adopted children, the Jews, were by Him rejected, we Gentiles were admitted to partake of his inheritance. Never may we, like them, lose it by our wickedness ! The Lord with whom we have to do is one who "trieth the hearts" as surely as fire trieth the silver and the gold. No false tongue can pass for true with him, whatsoever it may do with man. No cruel mockery of the poor will fail to be set down for reproach of the God who made them. No gladness of heart at the calamity of others will be able to escape the divine punishment. Let then the arrogant take warning. Let those who in the wantonness of wealth or strength make sport to themselves of the afflictions of their brethren, call to mind the words of Christ, to be spoken in the last day, to all who act an uncharitable part towards the poor, words proving that He will regard such conduct as practised towards Himself. See *Matth. 25. 45.*

If "children's children" are a glory to parents, and if "the glory of children are their fathers," let us as God's dear children endeavour to glorify our heavenly Father; and let us feel it our own high glory to be children of God. If "excellent speech becometh not a fool," let us aim not at speaking less excellently, but at acting more wisely. If lying lips become not a prince, let us remember the high crown of glory to which we are called, and put away from us all falsehood whatsoever. If "a gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it," welcome in whatsoever aspect it is viewed, how much more ought we to receive with thankfulness the unspeakable gift of God, the gift of life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord! And if it be a token of love, and a way of promoting love, to cover a transgression, and to forbear repeating the report of faults, what must be the love of Him, who by his blood has washed out our sins, and in virtue of whose death upon the cross it is promised unto penitent believers, that all the transgressions which they have committed shall no more be mentioned unto them! And if a reproof will so deeply enter into a wise man, even more "than an hundred stripes into a fool," how much more deeply ought the promise of free pardon to affect our hearts, the assurance that if we believe in Christ we are for his sake freely justified by the grace of Almighty God!

But alas the evil hearts of many are so fully bent upon rebellion, that all this goodness only prompts them to presume the more. Fierce towards each other as "a bear robbed of her whelps," they are thankless and heart hardened towards God. And to them the Lord who died for their salvation might justly say, as He said to the Jews of old, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" John 10. 32. But "whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house." Awfully have these words proved true in the case of rebellious Israel. Awfully will the words be realized in us, if we requite the good done to us by God by presuming to continue in our sins. Death, "a cruel messenger," is at hand. "And after death the judgment." Heb. 9. 27. And what can be then more hopeless than the case of those, who know the love of God in Christ only to abuse it, who make profession of belief in the atonement of their Saviour's blood, and so much the more persist in committing the very sins which cost his death?

*Proverbs on various subjects.*

- 14 The beginning of strife is *doeth it to his sorrow: and the*  
 when one letteth out water: *father of a fool hath no joy.*  
 therefore shall contention, *22 A merry heart doeth good*  
 follow: it is men's ruin. *like a medicine: but a broken*  
 15 He that justifieth the wick- *spirit drieth the bones.*  
 ed, and he that condemneth the *23 A wicked man taketh a gift*  
 just, even they both *are abomi-*  
 nation to the Lord. *out of the bosom to pervert the*  
 16 Wherefore is there a price in *ways of judgment.*  
 the hand of a fool to get wisdom, *24 Wisdom is before him that*  
 seeing he hath no heart to it? *hath understanding; but the*  
 17 A friend loveth at all times, *eyes of a fool are in the ends of*  
 and a brother is born for ad- *the earth.*  
 versity. *25 A foolish son is a grief to*  
 18 A man void of understand- *his father, and bitterness to her*  
 ing shall sell himself, and becom- *that bare him.*  
 eth a servant in the presence of *26 Also to punish the just is*  
 his friend. *not good, nor to strike princes*  
 19 He covereth transgression that *for equity.*  
 loveth strife: and he that exa- *27 He that hath knowledge*  
 cels his gate seeketh destruction. *spareth his words: and a man*  
 20 He that hath a froward *of understanding is of an excel-*  
 heart findeth no good: and he *lent spirit.*  
 that hath a perverse tongue fall- *28 Even a fool, when he hold-*  
 eth into mischief. *eth his peace, is counted wise:*  
 21 He that begetteth a fool *and he that shutteth his lips is*  
*estimated a man of understanding.*

## LECTURE 1041.

*(Continued.) studying divine wisdom.*

It is a striking comparison when "the beginning of strife" is said to be "as when one letteth out water." We all know how rapidly the whole will run out, when once an opening is made; how soon a small opening is enlarged, until the mischief done is vast beyond all measure. Let us all remember, that like to this is the beginning of strife, and like to this its progress. Let us be aware that to love strife is to love transgression. And as the love of strife is always accompanied with pride of heart, let us further observe, that while that exalts his gate seeketh destruction." And that while he thus seeks he shall surely find; for "He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue shall fall into mischief." May God give us the charity that "vaunteth not itself," and "thinketh no evil;" 1 Cor. 13. 4, 5; and which by bearing all things cuts off the beginning of contention, "before it be meddled with!"

The prophet Isaiah proclaims woe unto them "which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him." Is. 5. 23. Here we are told, that they who do so "are abomination to the Lord." Hence we may take



warning against the corruptions of that church, which sells indulgences for sin, and ascribes that merit to man's righteousness, which belongs only to the precious blood of Christ, whereby God shews Himself to be at once just, and the Justifier of penitent believers. See Rom. 3. 26. How foolish they, who having in their hands the means of attaining to this heavenly wisdom, have no heart to attain to it! How wise, how happy they, who put their whole trust in the only Friend which "loveth at all times," and who was born into this world of sin to save us from the miserable fruit of our transgression! How gracious, and infinitely merciful in Him, to become our Surety, to do for us that which we in our temporal affairs can seldom do safely for each other, to become our Surety to God, and to make our everlasting peace with Him!

Our own experience proves to us how bitter a thing it is to have children that are foolish and rebellious. How then can we have the heart to be undutiful children unto God? How can we sufficiently adore his goodness, in loving us whilst we are yet undutiful, and in sending his Son to save us from our sins? If we grieve to think of our transgressions, let us also rejoice in remembering his love. Let us think of Him who came to turn our mourning into joy. Let us reverently study that mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh;" 1 Tim. 3. 16; that manifestation of divine justice, a gift, an unspeakable gift, taken "out of the bosom," "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father;" John 1. 18; given not "to pervert the ways of judgment," but to reconcile mercy and truth, righteousness and peace. See Ps. 85. 10. And whilst assured that "to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity," let us know also, that in this the righteousness and goodness of God were most certainly and signally revealed, namely in this, that "Messiah the Prince" was "cut off, but not for himself;" Dan. 9. 25, 26; but that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Is. 53. 5. When wisdom such as this is before us, when we may truly say of it, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart;" Rom. 10. 6; what foolishness would it be to look abroad for wisdom unto "the ends of the earth," instead of studying the written revelation of God, as the highest source of the best of knowledge! And in studying this divine wisdom how deep must be our reverence for sacred things! And in expressing that which we have learnt, how often should we better shew our understanding by silence than by words; and signify by speaking sparingly on subjects so mysterious, that we have at least perceived their depth to be beyond our line, their height above our reach; that we have at least found out thus much concerning God, that his judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out. See Rom. 11. 33.

*Proverbs on various subjects.*

- 1 Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.
- 2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.
- 3 When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.
- 4 The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.
- 5 It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.
- 6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.
- 7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.
- 8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.
- 9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.
- 10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.
- 11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.
- 12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.
- 13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.
- 14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?
- 15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.
- 16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.
- 17 He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.
- 18 The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.
- 19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.
- 20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.
- 21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.
- 22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.
- 23 The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.
- 24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

## LECTURE 1042.

*Our way to be friends of Christ.*

From the first proverb in this chapter we learn the evil of wilful separation, and of presuming to meddle with things that are too high for us. Then we are taught the folly of seeking

knowledge for the sake of display, the contempt that awaits the wicked, the pleasure and profit of wise discourse, the evil of perverted judgments, the propensity of the foolish for contention, and the mischief which their tongue is apt to bring upon themselves, and the mischief which the talebearer inflicts on others. Let us beware then of talking for talking's sake, lest we be tempted to season our discourse with topics which gratify the evil tempers of those to whom we speak. Let us be assured that the wounds which we inflict on others, by spreading abroad malicious reports, redound to our own hurt as well as to theirs, and are proofs of our own foolishness.

Further we here learn how near akin are slothfulness and wastefulness, how secure a refuge is "the name of the Lord," how apt the rich are to put their confidence in riches, how commonly pride is followed by disaster, and humility by honour, how foolish and disgraceful a thing it is to be hasty in giving an opinion before one has heard the matter out, how much a man's spirit will enable him to bear, but when the spirit itself is wounded how sad the case then is, how eagerly the wise seek knowledge and listen to instruction, and how effectually a gift serves to introduce the giver into the presence of great men. The custom here referred to still prevails throughout the eastern portion of the world; no man visits his superior without a present in his hand. Let us never draw nigh to God in prayer without pleading the offering made once for all by Christ, whereby we all have always access to the Father.

But further we learn here that a cause which by being first stated appears just, may often prove in the end to be unjust, that the lot will often cause contentions to cease, deciding points which in our defective state of knowledge we cannot decide by reason, that contentions and grudges between brother and brother are hard to allay, that great satisfaction may be derived from the right use of the lips, whilst fatal harm may ensue from the licence of the tongue, that as it is not good for man to be alone, it is a benefit for a man to be united to a wife, that the poor are apt to use the language of petition, and the rich to answer roughly, and that a man that would have friends must shew a friendly disposition, whereby he may gain "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." But let us not set our hearts on man's friendship. Let us be thankful to think that He is our Friend who now "sitteth at the right hand of God." Col. 3. 1. And if we would know what behaviour on our part entitles us to be called friends of his, let us listen to his own most gracious words: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15. 4.



*Proverbs - Chapter II. Various subjects.*

1. Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.
2. Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good: and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.
3. The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord.
4. Wealth maketh many friends: but the poor is separated from his neighbour.
5. A wise witness shall not be unjustified, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.
6. Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.
7. All the iniquity of the poor he hath him: how much more do his friends go far from him: he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.
8. The true witness shall not be unjustified, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.
9. The desire of a man delecteth his anger: and it is his folly to pass over a transgression.
10. The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion: but his favour is as dew upon the grass.
11. A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual annoyance.
12. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord.

## LECTURE 1043.

*The wise though poor better than the foolish rich.*

IN many of these proverbs there is a comparison between the case of one who is poor but wise and righteous, and the case of one who is rich and powerful but foolish and wicked. It is obvious on which side the advantage lies: though few perhaps, if they could choose for themselves, would have the resolution to prefer it. True it is that "wealth maketh many friends," that "many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." True it is that "the king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion: but his favour is as dew upon the grass." But notwithstanding these advantages of wealth and power, "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool," however rich or great he may be. See ch. 25. 6. "Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good: and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth." And this is commonly the case with the sort of person here intended, he is impetuous and rash. Again "the foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord." The having much will not prevent a man from fretting because he has not more, and they whose possessions are the largest are not unfrequently the most discontented.

And what if such an one have swelled his means by falsehood and wrong? what if he seek their increase by false witness and deceit? Let him not hope to go unpunished. Let him be assured "he that speaketh lies shall perish." Nor even whilst he lives in the possession of his wealth will it yield him the joy he looks for. That the best things of the earth should be possessed by the worst of mankind is so manifestly unfit, that when it happens it yields little satisfaction. That one who cannot rule his own temper should have great men for his servants, cannot be according to the will of the Lord. And how many are the means by which God may please to humble one who is at once great and wicked. Amongst them these two may be mentioned: "A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." And what security can any one have against these evils without the blessing of the Lord? "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers;" they come down to the evil as well as to the good. "And a prudent wife is from the Lord;" and is therefore only to be expected by those whom the Lord has declared that He will bless.

Next let us observe the case of the man that is poor, but at the same time wise and righteous. He may be separated by his poverty from his neighbour; he may be hated of his brethren, and deserted by his friends; but notwithstanding "he that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good." He is greater than the mighty, being master of himself; he is wealthier than the wealthy, being rich towards God. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." How much greater glory than to be able to take vengeance, and unable to refrain from doing so! The wisdom which enables him to master one passion, enables him also to master others. And though he be a servant of servants among men, yet if he have attained real self controul, if he deny himself for God's sake in obedience to God's will, he is highly esteemed before God. And especially if he have the heart to pass over a transgression, to forgive an offending fellow creature, to forgive as fully and as freely as he hopes to be forgiven, this confers on him the glory of being like unto his Maker; who out of the abundance of his mercy and through the all prevailing merits of his Son, has been pleased to pass over the transgressions of his people, and to remember their sins no more.

*Proverbs LX. 1-34.*

1. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep: and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

2. He that despiseth the commandment receiveth his just reward: but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

3. He that maketh perjury upon the poor, casteth into the Lord: and that which he hath given will he take him again.

4. Trusten thy wit while there is hope, and let not thy wit and wares be as nothing.

5. A man of great wealth shall suffer for want of salt: but if thou deliver thyself, yet thou must be in haste.

6. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

7. There are many devices in a man's heart: nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

8. The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.

9. The fear of the Lord maketh to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied: he shall not be visited with evil.

10. A scoffer will hide his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

11. Scorn is a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

12. He that wasteth his father, and causeth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

13. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

14. An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

15. Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

## LECTURE 1044.

*The judgments awaiting scorners.*

It is no less true in our spiritual progress, than in our temporal affairs, that "slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." Let us then be diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord, for this is our way to have the soul grow in grace. "But he that despiseth his ways shall die." He who is like Gallio, that "cared for none of these things," Acts 18. 17, shall perish in his carelessness. And especially let us keep the commandment to shew pity to the poor. For behold, that which we bestow on them is counted for so much lent unto the Lord, to be by Him most graciously repaid. Who would not then be diligent, if it were only that he might earn more for almsgiving, seeing that God vouchsafes to look thus favourably on alms properly bestowed? Who would not fulfil the exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians, that they should labour, working with their hands in some honest work, in order that they might have to give to them that are in need?

Diligence in labour is near akin to that activity and firmness of



spirit which enables an affectionate father to chastise with wholesome severity an offending child. And it is indolence or indifference, not true affection, which can alone account for the neglect of this duty on the father's part. And yet it would ill become a parent to chastise in wrathful passion. Such a temper would unfit us for the discharge of any duty, and would expose us to many a trouble. It would disqualify us for listening to that instruction, without which we cannot hope to "be wise in the latter end." It would drive us on to follow the devices of our own hearts, devices sure to fail; whereas "the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Besides this violence of temper is most opposite to that kind disposition which is "the desire of a man," the thing that makes a man liked and loved. "And a poor man is better than a liar;" a poor man, if amiable, is better than one who has become rich by falsehood, or than one who being rich is also false. Let us therefore follow after truth and meekness, uprightness and love. Let us study to do our duty unto all men at once firmly and gently, resolved to please God at all costs, and glad when we can at the same time please our brethren. Thus shall we find that "the fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil."

Slothfulness, which in one of these proverbs is said to cast "into a deep sleep," is described in another by the figure of a man's hiding his hand in his bosom, and being unwilling to draw it out again even for the purpose of taking his food. We have but to put forth our hands and we may take hold on life eternal. Strange that any should be slothful when the reward of diligence is so great! Strange that any should be not only slothful, but also scornful, that the simple should need warning against risk of scorn, and even he that hath understanding should require reproof, in order to understand knowledge! But there are some that go to such a length of presumption as to defy and disgrace their parents. There are some that set at nought the divine majesty of their Father which is in heaven. Let us never for one moment listen to the teaching of those who would make us err from the truth, and make us acquainted with the deadly knowledge of the unbelieving and profane. Let us refuse to hear the evil testimony of those who make a mock of sin, and deny with mockery the judgment to come. That such there are it is painful to reflect. And the end which awaits them ought to fill our hearts with the most lively apprehension in behalf of them. "Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools." And what judgments! what stripes! what outer darkness! what endless burnings! what weeping and gnashing of teeth! Lord, have mercy on such sinners against their own souls, humble their pride, destroy their confidence, enlighten their ignorance, and turn their daring words of scorn to penitent confession, fervent prayer, and songs of heartfelt praise; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.



men will proclaim every one his own goodness : but a faithful man who can find ?" Who can find any who really are that which so many boast of being ? Certainly they who most loudly proclaim that they are good, are in reality far from being so. He who "walketh in his integrity" is not apt to make mention of his progress, but is inclined to esteem others better than himself. See Phil. 2. 3. And "his children are blessed after him." They have many advantages in his excellent precepts and example. And besides these they have reason to expect an especial blessing from the Lord.

"A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." This ought to be the aim of rulers on the earth. How much more is this the object of the heart searching God ! But alas which of us but must feel that in his sight we are seen to be miserable sinners ? Who at least can say "I have made my heart clean, I am free from my sin ?" No, if we are pure, it is not of our doing. It must be because we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. It must be because we are counted righteous for Christ's sake by the pure and holy God. He is at once just and the Justifier of sinners who believe. He delights in justice, else why should He abhor false weights and measures. He delights in justice, and yet also He delights in mercy. And it is in the atonement of the death of Christ that He shews himself to be at once just and merciful ; righteous to inflict punishment, and yet free to forgive sinners.

"Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right." That is to say, the judgment of the Lord extends even to children. There is a distinction between good and evil even in them. And who can say how soon it begins ? Who can determine how early in life a child becomes responsible for its actions ? "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them." No wonder then that He both hears and sees all things, and rules for good or evil, even the conduct of little children. "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty ; open thine eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." That is to say, open them early. Be an early riser, instead of a late sleeper. This is a great point in diligence. This is a figure of spiritual watchfulness. Far be from us sloth of the soul. Far be it from us to love sleep in respect to things divine, to be careless about learning the truth, and slothful in doing it. Or if any be overtaken with this idleness, let them listen to these solemn words of warning, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5. 14.



*Proverbs on various subjects.*

14 *It is naught, it is naught,* saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.

16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

19 He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

21 An inheritance *may* be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

23 Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.

24 Man's goings *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

25 *It is* a snare to the man *who* devoureth *that which is* holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

26 A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is uphelden by mercy.

29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.

## LECTURE 1046.

*God chastises us for our good.*

To depreciate that which we wish to buy, and having bought to boast of our bargain, is both acting unfairly and glorying in iniquity. And forcibly are these practices exposed in the proverb following: "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." To do fairly, and as we would be done by, is far better than all such profit. And precious as gold and jewels are, divine wisdom is more to be esteemed. Good sense in our worldly affairs is also precious, and will prevent many a serious loss. Thus it will teach us not to lend without due security to those who are themselves willing to be surety for a stranger or strange woman. And it will convince us that bread acquired by deceit, however sweet it may seem at first, will prove unpalatable at last. Much more will divine wisdom make us abhor all deceitfulness, and put us on our guard against trusting in any thing or in any person not trustworthy, against trusting for eternity in any one save Jesus Christ.

"Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war." That is to say consider the matter well, and consult together carefully, before undertaking a matter so full of hurt. "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." For such an one will entice you to speak, with a view to make mischief with your words. "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness:" his life shall set in "outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 22. 13. "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning: but the end thereof shall not be blessed." Let no one then make haste to grow rich. But let those who have their livelihood to earn be content with moderate gains, earned by diligence, together with patient continuance in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call them.

"Say not thou, I will recompense evil: but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee." Leave it to Him to redress wrongs, and be assured that He will in his due time establish that which is just and good. And for a proof of his love of equity, observe, that "divers weights are an abomination unto the Lord; and a false balance is not good." "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" How can any man presume to judge and act for himself, independently of God? "It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy," who appropriates to his own use that which is consecrated to the Lord; "and after vows to make enquiry," whereas he ought to enquire before the vows are made.

"A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them;" in which proverb it seems that winnowing and thrashing are referred to, as figures of a wise king's administration in separating the evil from the good. But lest too much severity should seem to be here sanctioned, it is added soon afterwards, "Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy." The light of conscience appears to be the thing described, when it is said that "the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly;" calling to account all our most secret thoughts and desires. "The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head." Let then the young devote their strength to God's glory. Let the old take care that the hoary head "be found in the way of righteousness." ch. 16. 31. "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly." If then chastisement even unto the inflicting of wounds could be serviceable for the correction of transgressors of the law, let us not repine under any affliction which it may please God to lay upon us. For we may be sure that He wounds only with a view to cleanse and purify and heal.

*Proverbs on various subjects.*

1 The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

2 Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

3 To do justice and judgment *is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

4 An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.

5 The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness; but of every one *that is* hasty only to want.

6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

8 The way of man *is* froward and strange: but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

9 *It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

11 When the scorner is punished, the simple *is* made wise: and when the wise *is* instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

12 The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: *but* God overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

15 *It is* joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

## LECTURE 1047.

*Of rejoicing in well doing.*

Great and independent as a monarch appears in the eyes of men, his heart is in the hand of the Lord no less than that of the meanest of his subjects. They which bear rule are here profitably reminded of this truth. And they and all men are assured, that however right their way may seem in their own eyes, "the Lord pondereth the hearts." And no doubt He often sees therein that which proves a man's way to be wrong. For all men, and especially for rulers, it is well to be put in remembrance, that "to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Moreover "an high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin." Let not then power and authority beguile those who have them into looks of pride, or into acts of oppression. Let the most mighty of the earth humble themselves before God. And let them act under such a constant sense of his presence, as will help to make them kind to the most lowly.



Sovereign power belongs to few amongst mankind. Riches are within the reach of many, and present to all the same kind of temptations. The way to obtain them in abundance is by diligence, but not by haste. The getting them by falsehood and dishonesty leads to no satisfaction in possessing them, but only to the restlessness of an evil conscience. The wicked who rob, and refuse to restore that which they have taken wrongfully, do so to their own destruction. And whilst the way of such men as these "is froward and strange," "as for the pure, his work is right." God be praised that such there are, men who conscientiously do right, men who would not do wrong or rob their brethren for any consideration whatsoever, men whose hearts are free from guile, and whose doings and dealings are untainted with dishonesty!

After mention of the frowardness of man, we are warned of the misery which ensues on dwelling with a brawling woman. However spacious be the house, there is no room for peace in her society; and it would be "better to dwell in a corner of the housetop." The same might be said truly of a froward man. Nay, it is not well to have such an one even for a neighbour. For "the soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes." He spares not even those who dwell most nigh to him, and who for that reason are especially entitled to his kind regard. "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise." And perhaps nothing short of witnessing and fearing punishment will impress the simple with true wisdom. And when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge; not needing the terror of punishment, but learning by means of the voice of instruction. Yes, and he derives instruction also from witnessing the evil which befalls others; "the righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked; but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness."

Of all wickedness none seems more inexcusable than harsh conduct towards our poorer fellow creatures. And awful is the sentence here recorded against the man who "stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." The anger and "strong wrath" thus provoked are such as no gift of man can pacify. For though gifts have great weight with men, what have we to give that can avail with God? How glad then ought we to feel on finding, that God moves our hearts to shew compassion to the poor! how joyful at feeling joy in doing right, how afraid of being numbered with the workers of iniquity! God be praised, that there are many whose joyful feelings are thus in harmony with his word and will! God increase their number an hundred fold! God grant unto us all that we may both do that which is right, and also rejoice in doing it, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

*Proverbs on various subjects.*

- 16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.
- 17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.
- 18 The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.
- 19 *It is* better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.
- 20 *There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.
- 21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.
- 22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.
- 23 Whoso keepeth his mouth
- and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.
- 24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.
- 25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.
- 26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.
- 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?
- 28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.
- 29 A wicked man hardeneth his face: but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.
- 30 *There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.
- 31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

## LECTURE 1048.

*Of putting our whole trust in God.*

“The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.” What place and company this means is hard to say exactly. But there can be little doubt that some harm is here denounced to happen to a man after death, if whilst alive he wilfully departs from the knowledge of the truth. Nor is it only in this life that the lover of pleasure will be poor; sensuality robs the soul of the riches of eternity. “The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous;” that is to say, wicked men are given up to harm rather than that the righteous should be hurt. Thus the Lord says to Israel by the prophet, “I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.” Isa. 43. 3. In which passage we find the word ransom used much in the same sense as here, for a substitute, but not for a saviour; Egypt being the ransom of the Israelites, but the Holy One of Israel their Saviour.

The misery of dwelling with a woman of perverse temper is here a second time pointed out in this chapter. Let the woman whose besetting sin is anger learn hence, how unhappy her ill temper is apt to make all who live under the same roof. If we count it wisdom to provide store of things needful, if foolish to use up such a store wastefully; how much more is it foolish to neglect the laying up treasure in heaven! how much more is it wise to follow after "righteousness and mercy," and so to find "life, righteousness and honour!" Wisdom often proves itself superior to strength, as when by dint of skill men scale a fortified city. And silence is often the part of wisdom, and the way to avoid many a trouble. Whilst he who cannot refrain from expressing his evil temper, but "dealeth in proud wrath," he who is haughty and irritable, and gives vent to his pride and anger, deserves to bear no better name than this, "Proud and haughty scorner."

The consequence of being slothful is to want without having, yea, even to perish with hunger; a truth which is thus expressed; "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long." And whilst the slothful man is thus pining in want, the diligent have enough for themselves and others; they have it, and they have the heart to bestow it on the needy, "the righteous giveth and spareth not." But if the wicked should have the means of giving alms, and should offer this or any other sacrifice to God, it would be all in vain; for "the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination." It is so in itself; even though it is offered in good faith; if a man is in other things habitually wicked, his best offerings made to God are abomination in his sight. "How much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" when his very intent in offering any sacrifice is evil; as for instance, if he thinks thereby to purchase indulgence in his sin, or when he purposes to offer sacrifice, by way of making that atonement for his sins, which nothing really can make, except the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

"A false witness shall perish; but the man that heareth speaketh constantly;" this means the true witness, who adheres strictly to the truth of that which he has heard or seen. "A wicked man hardeneth his face; but as for the upright he directeth his way;" this means that he shapes his conduct according to the will of God. "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord," that is to say, none that will stand; none which He will not utterly overthrow. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord." And it was to teach the Israelites to trust in Him, that in the law He forbade their kings to multiply horses to themselves. See Deut. 17. 16. Let us learn from this proverb to put no trust in earthly means of safety; but whilst we provide with prudence such means as we can, to put all our confidence in God.



*Proverbs on various subjects.*

- 1 A *good* name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.
- 2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.
- 3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.
- 4 By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honour, and life.
- 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.
- 6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
- 7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.
- 8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.
- 9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.
- 10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.
- 11 He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.
- 12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.
- 13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.
- 14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.
- 15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.
- 16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

## LECTURE 1049.

*Heaven graciously offered alike to rich and poor.*

Amongst the things which St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to think of, are "whatsoever things are of good report." Phil. 4. 8. This is the kind of "good name" which "is rather to be chosen than great riches." This is one out of many points in which rich and poor stand on the same footing. The same holiness is within the reach of both; the same good name on earth, the same happiness eternal in the heavens. One God "is the maker of them all;" one Christ is the Saviour of them all. And when all meet together before Him hereafter, it is likely to happen often, as in the case of the rich man and Lazarus, that they who have here received their good things will be tormented, and they who have here received evil things will be comforted. Let us then foresee the evil, and prudently take shelter under the cross of Christ, under the protection which He graciously offers alike to all of every condition. By "humility and the fear of the Lord," let us seek "riches, honour, and life," for evermore.

"Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them." This keeping of the soul means a man's watching over himself, and keeping himself free from sin. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it." If a man must discipline himself, much more must he discipline his children. For the earlier the age, so much the more effectual are the pains taken to guide the thoughts and feelings into a right direction. "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." How foolish then are they who run headlong into debt to gratify their love of luxury, and for a little present pleasure sacrifice the independence of their lives! "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail." How vain is his murmuring and repining! He has reaped that which accords with what he sowed. He might as well be angry because the seed which he sows in his field comes up in due season after its kind.

"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor." The blessings of those whom he relieves are his, and besides them he has also a blessing from the Lord. "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea strife and reproach shall cease." Their scornful words and actions are most apt to produce strife. And if there were a wholesome discipline practised in the church, there would be a way to cast out such as these from our society, until they should have cast out their sins. "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend;" a proverb which may remind us of our Saviour's words, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matt. 5. 8. And surely God sees them, and notes them as being good in his sight; for "The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor."

And what a lively picture of slothfulness is this: "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets!" How often do we meet with objections like to this, on the part of those who are slow to do good! And what an awful account next follows of those who are given up to the snares of strange women: "The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein!" Our natural tendency to folly in our childhood, how truly is this also here described, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child!" And the necessity of chastisement, and the usual good effect of it, how strongly are these enforced, where it is added, "the rod of correction shall drive it far from him!" Nor are these words of warning less striking, as to the want which awaits the oppressor of the poor, and the giver of bribes to the rich; "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want."

*An exhortation to attend to the proverbs.*

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.

19 That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,

21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth: that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

23 For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

26 Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

## LECTURE 1050.

*That the book of Proverbs is inspired.*

We find Solomon here returning to a strain of exhortation, like that with which the early chapters of this book are filled. He may be considered either as addressing his son, or as speaking to any reader of the book, as to a son whom he desired to instruct, to warn, and to encourage in well doing. "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise," proverbs being sayings of wise men in general use and estimation. "And apply thine heart unto my knowledge:" these proverbs in particular having been selected and adopted by Solomon as his own, and stamped through him with divine authority. "For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." So well adapted were they for the times and circumstances of the persons addressed! So happily does the word of revelation fit the necessities of man's nature, and minister pleasure and peace to the soul, in supplying the knowledge of the truth! "That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee." Not that we should have confidence in our own works, not that we should be puffed up with the knowledge of divine things, not for this does God reveal his word, not for this does He exhort us to holiness of life; but that our trust may be in Him. And moreover it is in order that we may make known the truth to others, that we may give an answer



to every one that enquires for the way of life. "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" Happy they who use God's words for purposes like these, to know the truth themselves, and to make it known to others, and instead of being puffed up to be humbled by the knowledge of God and of themselves, and to rest all their confidence in Him!

After these general exhortations, we have some special directions for a right conduct, much of the same nature as the previous proverbs, but in the form of a personal address. We are charged not to rob the poor, because he is poor, not to take advantage of his poverty; nor to oppress the afflicted in the gate, which place in ancient cities was the usual place of trying and deciding causes. "For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them;" an Advocate whom no skill can baffle, an Avenger whom no power can resist. We are charged to make no friendship with an angry man, and to keep no company with a furious man: lest we learn their evil ways, and our souls become ensnared therein. For the passion of wrath is as a fire that spreads readily from one man to another; and the sin, which we are in the habit of viewing favourably in our friends, is very likely to become soon less hateful to ourselves. We are further warned not to be of them that are ready to make rash engagements in the way of suretyship for the debts of others, especially when we have not means of our own to defray the debts for which we undertake. "If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?" Why should we expose ourselves and families to such entire destitution? Our duty to our neighbour does not extend beyond doing unto him as we would that he should do unto us. And the kind of suretyship here intended, according to the laws and customs of the Israelites, was such as no well disposed person would call upon his neighbour to undertake in his behalf. "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." Where there were few fences, such landmarks were the chief means of knowing one man's property from another. To remove them was to rob a man of his land. And the command not to move them may be figuratively applied to the case of any innovation. Men given to change seldom consider whom they wrong or injure in their projected removal of ancient landmarks. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings: he shall not stand before mean men." Would we then stand in a favourable light before the King of kings? Let us endeavour to be "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Rom. 12. 11.

*Solomon addresseth several proverbs to his son.*

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| <p>1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what <i>is</i> before thee,</p> <p>2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou <i>be</i> a man given to appetite.</p> <p>3 Be not desirous of his dainties : for they <i>are</i> deceitful meat.</p> <p>4 Labour not to be rich : cease from thine own wisdom.</p> <p>5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ? for <i>riches</i> certainly make themselves wings ; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.</p> <p>6 Eat thou not the bread of <i>him that hath</i> an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats :</p> <p>7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so <i>is</i> he : Eat and drink, saith he to thee ; but his heart <i>is</i> not with thee.</p> <p>8 The morsel <i>which</i> thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.</p> <p>9 Speak not in the ears of a fool : for he will despise the</p> | <p>wisdom of thy words.</p> <p>10 Remove not the old landmark ; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless :</p> <p>11 For their redeemer <i>is</i> mighty ; he shall plead their cause with thee.</p> <p>12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.</p> <p>13 Withhold not correction from the child : for <i>if</i> thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.</p> <p>14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.</p> <p>15 My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.</p> <p>16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.</p> <p>17 Let not thine heart envy sinners : but <i>be thou</i> in the fear of the LORD all the day long.</p> <p>18 For surely there is an end ; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.</p> |
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### LECTURE 1051.

*God pleads with us as with dear children.*

The general principles of practical wisdom, abounding in this book, are accompanied by directions for our conduct in several particular cases. A very common case with many is the partaking of festive entertainment at the houses of the great. This is a source of much temptation, both to the vain and to the sensual. In such cases a man ought to put a check upon his appetite, which by a strong figure of speech is termed putting a knife to his throat. And besides not being desirous of the ruler's dainties, he ought to watch that he is not ambitious of the distinction of his acquaintance. Neither let him set his heart upon being rich, which many are tempted to do when they partake of the luxuries of the wealthy. But let him consider that this would be to covet "that which is not ; for riches certainly make themselves wings ; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." And let him be aware



that amongst those whose society he courts, and whose feasts he longs for, there are some whose words may be courteous, but whose hearts all the while are cold, some who are so thoroughly selfish, even in the hospitality which they offer to their neighbours, that it is enough to make their guests loathe the meat they partake of, and repent of the attention paid to them. Thus would Solomon dissuade us from coveting a place at the entertainments of those who are our superiors in rank and wealth. Thus would the Holy Spirit wean our affection from earthly joys, lead us to labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life, and make us ambitious to be kindly received by that great Ruler of the universe, who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." James 1. 5.

Our Lord bids us not give that which is holy unto the dogs, nor cast our pearls before swine; see Matt. 7. 6; which is a confirmation of this proverb, "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words." Oh may God grant us wisdom, to receive, and understand, and value, the precious lessons, which He graciously here vouchsafes to teach us! Such are these, not to remove old landmarks; not to encroach upon the fields of the fatherless, since God will Himself plead and avenge their cause; to apply our ears and hearts unto instruction and knowledge; and to administer due correction to children, since present chastisement will probably be the means of their being rescued from future judgment. This last point is often insisted on by Solomon. No doubt it is one which needs to be frequently repeated. The too fond affection of the parent would fain spare the rod of correction. But without it the child is ruined. And the truly loving father, who applies it with due firmness on occasion of his son's transgression, not only does all that in him lies to check the progress of the child's iniquity, but is also led to think, how frequently he himself deserves worse chastisement at the hand of God, and to thank God when He sees fit to inflict it. But God "will not always be chiding: neither keepeth he his anger for ever." Ps. 103. 9. We may consider that He is pleading with us, as with dear children, when Solomon pleads as follows with his son: "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things. Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off." A plain intimation of a future life. An express assurance, that if we live for eternity, we shall not be disappointed of our hope. A warning that the end is nigh; who then would envy sinners their shortlived pleasures? A comfortable promise that heaven is at hand. Who then would not live as "always looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" 2 Pet. 3. 12.



*Solomon addreſseth ſeveral proverbs to his ſon.*

19 Hear thou, my ſon, and be wiſe, and guide thine heart in the way.

20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of fleſh:

21 For the drunkard and the glutton ſhall come to poverty: and drowineſs ſhall clothe a man with rags.

22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and deſpiſe not thy mother when ſhe is old.

23 Buy the truth, and ſell it not: *also* wiſdom, and inſtruction, and underſtanding.

24 The father of the righteous ſhall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wiſe child ſhall have joy of him.

25 Thy father and thy mother ſhall be glad, and ſhe that bare thee ſhall rejoice.

26 My ſon, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes obſerve my ways.

27 For a whore is a deep ditch; and a ſtrange woman is a narrow pit.

28 She alſo lieth in wait as for

a prey, and increaſeth the transgreſſors among men.

29 Who hath woe? who hath ſorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cauſe? who hath redneſs of eyes?

30 They that tarry long at the wine: they that go to ſeek mixed wine.

31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright.

32 At the laſt it biteth like a ſerpent, and ſtingeth like an adder.

33 Thine eyes ſhall behold ſtrange women, and thine heart ſhall utter perverſe things.

34 Yea, thou ſhalt be as he that lieth down in the miſt of the ſea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a maſt.

35 They have ſtricken me, ſhalt thou ſay, and I was not ſick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when ſhall I awake? I will ſeek it yet again.

## LECTURE 1052.

*Againſt exceſs in drink, and following evil women.*

Amongſt the temptations in the young man's path, none are more destructive both to body and ſoul, than thoſe of exceſs in wine, and of wicked women. Well may the father call upon the ſon to hearken unto his counſel on points like theſe, and beſeech him not to turn a deaf ear to the advice of his aged mother. Well may both parents unite to urge their child to "buy wiſdom, and ſell it not," to obtain it at any coſt, and not to part with it for any conſideration. Well may they preſs him to reflect on the pleaſure which his good conduct would give them, and intreat him to requite them love for love, and to walk in the way which they point out to him. Deep is their anxiety, as their ſon grows up, leſt he ſacrifice the flower of his age to ſinful pleaſures. And how deep will be his remorse in after life, if his conſcience ſhall accuſe him of having put them to pain and ſhame by his mis-

conduct, instead of ministering to their joy by his good behaviour! How sharp must be the compunction of any amongst us, who have learnt to look on God as our Father, to think how often we have displeased Him by our sins, instead of glorifying his name by our holiness of life!

There are few sins to which the Almighty has attached more manifest signs of his displeasure than those held up to our abhorrence in the words before us. "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." Here gluttony and sloth are mentioned in conjunction with drunkenness; for in truth they are near of kin, and are very often found in company together. But drunkenness is soon afterwards dwelt on more at length by itself; "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine: they that go to seek mixed wine." How kind then is this counsel, that we suffer not ourselves to dwell on the sight of it with pleasure, lest we be decoyed into longing to partake of it to excess! How needful is the warning, that "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." How just and how shocking is the description of the drunkard in his drunkenness, set forth at the end of the chapter; wherein we have him set before us reeling like the shipman in a storm, even as they which go down to the sea in ships are said by the Psalmist to "reel to and fro" when tossed by the waves, and to "stagger like a drunken man!" Ps. 107. 27. An awful and disgusting condition for a man to have brought himself into by excess; made the more so by the drunkard's insensibility to his own miserable case, and by the infatuation with which he longs to return, and to seek again the cup of excess. May God's all powerful grace break through this bondage of sensuality! May they in whom the chain has been by any means effectually broken, give God all the glory!

Among the consequences of committing excess in strong drink one is this, "Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." It shall prompt the man whose passions are inflamed by strong drink to go after them, "as an ox goeth to the slaughter," or "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." Ch. 7. 22, 23. "A deep ditch," and "a narrow pit," are of use as means for taking wild animals. The artifices of the strange woman are well compared to these pitfalls of destruction. No toils of the hunter are more hard to break through, no pit is more difficult to scale and escape from, than the habits of a sensual and licentious life. The victim may struggle; but how seldom to any purpose! He may seek to retrace his steps to liberty and life; but how commonly does he seek in vain! Let then the young man beware; and let him ever carefully bear in mind, that in the ways of sensual sin no false step is of such fatal consequence as the first.

*Hebrews addressed several proverbs to his son.*

1. *Be not thou envious against adversity: thy strength is small, and thou neither desirest to be with them.*

2. *For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.*

3. *Thou art wisdom & art honest: and thy understanding is established.*

4. *And thy knowledge shall the compasser be filled with all precious and pleasant things.*

5. *A wife may be strong: yet a man of knowledge is more precious.*

6. *For by the counsel thou shalt make thy way: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

7. *Wisdom is thy right in a law: he overleth not his mouth in the gate.*

8. *So that deviceth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.*

9. *The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.*

10. *So that thou shalt be the day of mischief.*

*adversity: thy strength is small. If thou art envied, it deliver thee that art envied more death, and thou that art ready to be slain:*

*If thou seest, Seemest, we know it not: dost not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy seal, dost not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

*My son, eat thou honey, because it is good: and the honeycomb which is sweet to thy taste:*

*So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy son: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.*

*Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous: spoil not his resting place:*

*For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*

### LECTURE 1053.

*The duty of taking part with the injured.*

When evil men prosper in this present life, we might easily be tempted to envy their prosperity, were it not for such warning as is here given us. “Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.” Such are the subjects of their thoughts, such the topics of their discourse. And therefore no outward prosperity whatsoever can prevent them from being constantly uncharitable. Again, “He that deviseth to do mischief shall be called a mischievous person.” Their character will be known, and they will be called by their proper name: which is another reason against desiring to be with them. And again, “The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.” Their very thoughts make them sinners in the sight of God. Their scornful language, looks, and deeds, are hateful to their fellow creatures. Who then would wish to be with them in their miserable case? What prosperity can compensate for



incurring deservedly the hatred of our fellow creatures, and the displeasure of almighty God?

"Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established." The foolish and wicked man "studieth destruction." The wise man, instead of destroying, puts together, builds up, and turns to good account the materials abundantly supplied by the providence of God for man's use and comfort. "And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." It is then no new discovery that knowledge is power, or in other words, that "a wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength." And this is true, not only of the arts of peace, but also of those of war; "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety." So profitable is the exercise of reason, so great is the advantage which it gives us, in respect to the benefits of this life, over those for whom wisdom is too high. How infinitely more to be valued and desired is the wisdom of the life which is to come! If therefore we would eat honey for its sweetness, let us also take delight in "the knowledge of wisdom." This knowledge shall be found sweet to the soul. In finding of it we shall have great reward, and our expectation shall not be cut off. No, however highly we rate it beforehand, we shall find the reality still higher and better. And however full of peace and joy divine wisdom may prove unto us here, we have more, immeasurably more and better fruit, to reap of it, in the world which will be hereafter.

Divine wisdom is divine strength. It renders us strong for our conflict with sin, the world, and the devil. Adversity is one of the cases in which we have opportunity to prove this. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." Another case in which wisdom will give us strength, and in which the sense of strength will give us courage, is when we have opportunity to protect those who are assaulted, or to redress the wrongs of the injured. How hastily does the coward in a case like this pass by on the other side! See Luke 10. 32. How naturally does he excuse himself by saying, "Behold, we knew it not!" But there is One who "pondereth the heart." And He will "render to every man according to his works." And we know that among the duties which He requires of us this is one, to help our brethren when in jeopardy, as we would wish them in like case to help us. It is wrong then not to help them that suffer wrongfully. It is for lack of true wisdom, strength, and courage, that we ever shrink from taking part with the injured and oppressed. But whether we thus interpose to help or not, there is One who is the Helper of the helpless. And through his blessing it comes to pass, that however often a just man may fall into trouble, he "riseth up again." Whereas the wicked, who lie in wait against the dwelling of the righteous shall fall, by the ordinance of the same righteous God, shall fall, and rise no more.

*Summarily summarizing several promises to his son.*

17 I know not when mine eye  
my father, and at the time  
shall be great when he shall  
appear.

18 Let the Lord see it, and  
in his wisdom hear him, and let him  
show him when shall come.

19 I fear not myself because of  
evil men, neither do I stand  
in awe of the wicked:

20 For there shall be no reward  
to the evil man: the candle of  
the wicked shall be put out.

21 My soul fear not the  
Lord, and the King: and medi-  
cate me with them that are given  
to change:

22 For their calamity shall  
rise suddenly: and who know-  
eth the ruin of them back?

23 These things also belong to  
the wise. *It is not good to have  
respect of persons in judgment.*

24 He that hath sown the  
wicked, Thorns are righteous;  
him shall the people curse, na-  
tions shall abhor him:

25 But to them that rebuke  
him shall be delight, and a good  
blessing shall come upon them.

26 Every man shall kiss his  
lips that give a right answer.

27 Prepare thy work without,  
and make it fit for thyself in the  
heat: and afterwards build thine  
house.

28 Be not a witness against  
thy neighbour without cause;  
and deceive not with thy lips.

29 Say not, I will do so to him  
as he hath done to me: I will  
render to the man according to  
his work.

30 I went by the field of the  
sinner, and by the vineyard of  
the man void of understanding;

31 And lo, it was all grown  
over with thorns, and nettles  
had covered the face thereof,  
and the stone wall thereof was  
broken down.

32 Then I saw, and considered  
it well: I looked upon it, and  
received instruction.

33 Yet a little sleep, a little  
slumber, a little folding of the  
hands to sleep:

34 So shall thy poverty come  
as one that travelleth; and thy  
want as an armed man.

## LECTURE 1054.

*Against improvidence and slothfulness.*

The moral precepts of Scripture reach unto the inmost affections of the heart; and teach when we ought to rejoice and when not, when to be sorry and when not. Let us beware of rejoicing in any ill befalling those who are our enemies. For the Lord is privy to the joy which is in our heart. And by such rejoicing as this we should provoke his displeasure, and He would be likely to turn away his wrath from our evil enemies to ourselves. Let us beware of fretting when the wicked prosper. Their prosperity, we may be sure, is not permanent. And if we fret because they flourish for a time, we are guilty of undervaluing that in which they have no part, the promised happiness of eternity. May God give us grace to feel joy only when we ought to be joyful, and sorrow only when we ought to grieve, to be glad when the will of God Himself is done, and to grieve whensoever we see Him disobeyed!

Amongst his commandments there are few which are more notoriously disobeyed than these: "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change." And fearful is the penalty next set down: "For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?" In the commonwealth of Israel all the laws and institutions came direct from God. To attempt any change at all in them must therefore have been gross presumption, and wilful sin. In every nation the powers that be are ordained of God. See Rom. 13. 1. And it is always a sign of an ungodly spirit when men "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." Jude 8. Let us therefore neither be "given to change," nor take part with those who are so. And if, according to the constitution of our country, some share in the regulation of public business is very largely extended amongst us, let those who are entrusted with a duty so important, instead of being given to change, do all that in them lies to preserve unimpaired the excellent laws, and well regulated kingly government, under which it is their privilege to live.

Next follow some more rules of wisdom, or wise conduct, which relate to us as members of society. We must watch that we shew no respect to persons in judgment. We must beware of acquitting the guilty, or saying unto the wicked, "Thou art righteous." We must have the courage to bear our testimony, or to give our verdict, truly and impartially, against the evil doer. At the same time we must never witness against a neighbour "without cause;" never bear false witness against our neighbour. We must never requite an ill turn by unfavourable testimony; never give vent to malicious or revengeful feelings, under colour of bearing witness to the truth. A salutary caution; a rule of frequent application, not only in the proceedings of a court of justice, but in the ordinary conversation of society, in which we may very frequently be tempted to gratify a secret revenge, when we seem to be only anxious to give "a right answer."

Another duty here recommended is forethought, "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house." Thus he who begins to build, without being able to finish, is set forth in the Gospel, by our Lord, as an apt emblem of improvidence in general, and especially of want of forethought for eternity. See Luke 14. 30. Another sin here forcibly condemned is slothfulness. And this lively description of the slothful man's neglected field and vineyard, as well as of his own personal indulgence in sleep, is fitted to make us abhor the evil of sloth, and renounce all idleness and laziness. Poverty advancing with the speed of a traveller, and want with the strength of an armed man, soon overtake those who are thus slothful in this world's business. What then can they expect, who are slow to learn the truth, and idle in obeying it, what but to be poor towards God, and to be in want for ever and ever?



*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 1 These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.
- 2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.
- 3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.
- 4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.
- 5 Take away the wicked from the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.
- 6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:
- 7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither: than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.
- 8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.
- 9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:
- 10 Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.
- 11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.
- 12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof upon an obedient ear.
- 13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.
- 14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.

## LECTURE 1055.

*Means of avoiding strife.*

Here begins a distinct part of this book, being a collection of Solomon's proverbs copied out, and added to the former portion of the book, by "the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah." This good king, like Solomon, thought it "the honour of kings to search out a matter." He laboured, and employed others to labour, in the search of divine truth; that truth which God has thought fit to conceal in these proverbs and dark sayings, in order to prove us, and to try us, whether we will take pains to study them or not. Some of these wise sayings relate especially to the case of those who are possessed of kingly authority. Their heart is said to be unsearchable, like the height of heaven, and the depth of earth; which is probably an admonition to rulers that they ought to be careful in keeping the secrets of the state. They are told further, that as upon taking "away the dross from the silver, there shall come forth a vessel for the finer," so also on the wicked being removed from a king's court and counsels, "his throne shall be established in righteousness." But how

difficult is this rule for a king to put in practice! How often does he seem to be forced by circumstances over which he has no control, to give his authority and countenance to those, whom for their sins he ought rather to banish from his presence! And when we think of the difficulties which beset our sovereigns in the attempt to discharge their kingly duties on really religious principles, we shall see how deeply their subjects are bound to pray in their behalf, that their throne may be "established in righteousness."

One of the great difficulties which beset a king is this, that those of his subjects who are least deserving are the most apt to thrust themselves forward into notice, whilst those who would serve him best are such as obey the injunction here laid upon them, not to push themselves into the notice of the great; they are such as would rather wait to have it said unto them, "Friend, go up higher," than run the risk of being reprimanded thus, "Give this man place." Luke 14. 9, 10. Next to this due backwardness in our intercourse with those who are our superiors in rank and station, we are recommended to be slow in beginning any kind of strife, any suit at law, or other contest with each other, lest if we enter into such a struggle hastily, we find occasion to regret for a length of time the shame and loss ensuing. And often we shall do well to open our grievance to our neighbour in private, and so escape the public exposure of matters which may be turned to our disadvantage in the end. Which counsel may remind us of our Lord's injunction, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Matt. 18. 15.

In the proverbs which follow next, and in most of those which occur in the ensuing chapter, we are taught lessons of divine truth by similitudes taken from earthly objects. Thus the excellency of edifying conversation in due season, is set forth, by comparing it to "apples of gold in pictures of silver," which may perhaps mean the "pomegranates," and the "nets of checker work," and the "lily work," with which the chapiters of ten of the pillars of the temple were adorned. See 1 Kings 7. 17, 18, 19. Again, the excellency of "a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear," is like the beauty of "an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold." Again, the refreshment which snow may be made to yield, in the hot weather of harvest, serves by comparison to illustrate the value of "a faithful messenger to them that send him." Again, clouds and wind without rain, "at a time when rain is wanted," are an apt likeness of a man that "boasteth himself of a false gift," whose professions of bounty are not borne out in the fulfilment. Never then let us thus disappoint each other. Ever let us be faithful to those who employ us in whatsoever service we undertake. And finally, let us reprove wisely, if at all; and let us obediently listen to wise reproof.

*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.  
 16 Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.  
 17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house: lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.  
 18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.  
 19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.  
 20 As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and is vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.  
 21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat: and if he be thirsty, give him water.  
 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.  
 23 The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.  
 24 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.  
 25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.  
 26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.  
 27 It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.  
 28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

LECTURE 1036.

*Against giving way to an irritable temper.*

We have here several proverbs of similitude. Long forbearance succeeds in persuading a prince, even as the soft parts of the mouth render assistance in breaking hard bones asunder. Let us then endeavour to prevail by gentleness and meekness, not by force and violence. Tarrying too long in a neighbour's house would be apt to weary him, even as eating too much honey is apt to cloy and produce sickness. Let us then beware of being troublesome to others, but in this and all other respects let us do unto them as we would that they should do unto us. A false witness is compared to "a maul," or heavy mace, "and a sword, and a sharp arrow." Let us then beware that if we bear false testimony, we do wrong, as surely as if we were to wield against our neighbour these weapons of destruction. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint." Let us then be on our guard against confiding in the faithless, and much more be resolved that we will never prove unfaithful ourselves.

"As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart."



If then mirthful singing be so discordant and unwelcome to the afflicted, let us study to shew our sympathy for them that mourn, not only by refraining from mirth, but by speaking in that tone of affectionate concern which is most in harmony with the voice of their distress. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." This also is a parable of similitude. And the likeness must be taken from the effect of red hot coals in melting or softening hard substances. Such is the effect of undeserved and unexpected kindness in subduing the hatred of an enemy. Such is the aim and object of God's love and mercy, most unexpected, most undeserved, heaped up on our heads in the Gospel. May such be its effect fully realized in us, to soften our hearts in love towards Him who has thus first loved us!

"The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." Let us then put on a look of displeasure by way of checking those who would report evil to our ears. Let us feel hurt and vexed in our hearts at hearing any evil told against our neighbours. Our looks will then without any effort express our dislike of the practices of backbiting. "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." And this is no less true of a brawling man. Let us therefore exercise a due discretion in choosing with whom we live in the same house. And let us take pains with our own tempers, and set a watch on our own tongues, that we may not be the cause of pain and grief to those with whom we dwell. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Let us here think with joy and thankfulness on the glad tidings of the Gospel. Let us be athirst for the living waters which are given unto those who come to Christ by faith. See Is. 55. 1.

"A righteous man falling down before the wicked is a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." This likeness has additional force when we consider how precious a clear stream of pure water must have been in the warm climate of Judea. Far be it then from us not to help the righteous in their cause. Far be it from us not to defend them as far as in us lies from the unjust assaults of the wicked! "It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory." Far be it then from us to lay ourselves out for praise, or to devour greedily that sweet commendation, which even when unsought, and moderate in quantity, is apt to disorder the soul. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Far be it then from us to expose ourselves by an unsubdued temper to the assaults of every ill disposed person; and for want of being able to resist irritation, to lay our peace of mind at the mercy of any one who is inclined to vex us!

*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.
- 2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.
- 3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.
- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.
- 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.
- 6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.
- 7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.
- 9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 10 The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.
- 11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.
- 12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? *there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

## LECTURE 1057.

*The hopeless case of a vain person.*

These proverbs for the most part relate to foolish persons and to their foolishness. But the folly here spoken of is not that dullness of the faculties which a man cannot help, but such want of thought, such heedlessness, and wilful ignorance, as are in themselves sinful, and are the cause of a man's falling into many other sins. It is much to be regretted when persons of this kind are promoted to stations of honour. They are then as much out of place "as snow in summer, and as rain in harvest." "The curse causeless," which in their folly they are apt to swear, shall take no effect, but shall fly far from the mark like a wandering bird. A rod is suitable for the back of such as these, even as a bridle is needful to guide an obstinate animal, and a whip to intimidate a vicious one. Such persons are apt to shew their foolish disposition by foolish speaking; as, for instance, by jesting at things sacred, by railing at good men, and by speaking in praise of that which is evil. When they do so, we may adopt either of the two rules following, according to the circumstances of the case; first, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him;" next, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." When we cannot admit any part of his statements without sharing in his foolishness, we had better not reply to him at all, unless it be to contradict him altogether. But when we can shew him, that according to his own principles, he is wrong, then it may be well to

answer him on his own principles. Thus did our blessed Saviour at one time answer nothing, either to his accusers, or his judge; see Matt. 27. 12, 13; though at another time He had answered the same governor, when foolishly boasting of his power, telling him, that the power of which he boasted was given him from above. See John 19. 11.

Further, we are taught that persons of this foolish disposition are not fit to be trusted with the delivery of a message. What caution then is requisite on the part of those who appoint the messengers and ministers of the church! Neither is it secure for them to give utterance to wise and instructive conversation. How diligently therefore ought we to amend our lives that they may not be such as would make it ill become us to use an edifying conversation! He that gives these foolish persons honour, gives them that which they will soon throw away. And whosoever amongst them speaks the sayings of the wise, speaks that which will pierce and wound himself. Their evil notions are noted by the great God of heaven and earth for judgment, as surely as their wicked practices. And though they may for a time be made sensible of their foolishness, they are very apt to return to it again. So closely is it bound up in their hearts. So inveterate, where once encouraged, is the habit of acting without due consideration, acting without thinking of God, and of his will, and of his glory, to which all our actions ought to be directed.

After so many severe proverbs directed against this foolishness of heart, there follows one which denounces in still stronger language the sin of vanity. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Hopeless as is the case of a foolish man, that of a vain man is still more hopeless. Vanity is indeed usually in some measure connected with this kind of foolishness mentioned in this chapter. And where vanity is indulged largely, there foolishness is most extreme and most incurable. The vain man is "wise in his own conceit." He sets his face against receiving the wisdom that is of God. He is averse to think of a Being infinitely wiser, greater, and better, than himself. And he cannot bear to be told, that in the sight of this Being he is a miserable sinner, whose only means of escaping the wrath to come are the renouncing all confidence in himself, and depending on the merits of another. Never then let us be wise in our own conceit. Never let us give way to this fatal inclination to over estimate ourselves. Let us regard ourselves as we really are, and we shall then be in our own conceit foolish, weak, and sinful. And we shall be the more likely to have recourse to God for that wisdom, strength, and righteousness, which are only to be found in Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. -





between others, the dangerous consequences of reporting a false tale in sport, the bad effect of talebearing in general, as keeping up strife, even as wood is fuel to fire, and the like of a contentious temper, which being indulged by one man kindles strife in another. Further the words of a talebearer are compared to wounds in a vital part. And words of warm affection with a wicked heart beneath, are said to be like "a potsherd covered with silver dross;" like a piece of the earthen crucible in which silver has been melted, broken pottery within, and the outside show of silver no better than dross. This dissembling of the lips is a common practice with those who prate; we ought therefore to be cautious in believing fair professions of friendship, when we know that there has been a settled enmity in the heart. Such enmity, so covered by fair profession, shall be exposed to the common indignation, if not in this world, yet surely in the next. The snare thus laid shall be for the fall of him that lays it, the stone thus rolled for harm shall return to hurt him who would do harm by it. And bitterly as the deceitful person hates those whom he deceives, and great as is the harm which under cover of flattery he designs to work, he will find that he has been most largely his own enemy, and has brought upon himself the most irreparable ruin.

The disposition to be at variance is one of the first evil propensities which shews itself in the young, as it is also one of the earliest sins of which we read in the Scriptures after the fall of man. When we see two infant brothers quarrelling, when we think of one brother, in the family of the first man, rising up in wrath and slaying another, we may well suspect, that however peaceably we are disposed to live, we must every one of us have within our hearts the seeds of strife and enmity. Glad we may therefore be to learn, from proverbs like these, the causes, and symptoms, and progress of contention, in order to our being better on our guard. Carefully we ought to watch over our own hearts, against the first beginnings of strife. And firmly we ought to turn a deaf ear towards those, who by deceit, flattery, or talebearing, are apt to generate ill will, and to foment contention. And let us take care that we never do any thing of this kind ourselves. Let us never report evil of one another as talebearers. Let us never even in sport say words which may lead to serious quarrels. Let us never provoke wrath by wrath. Let us never harbour enmity in our hearts. Neither let us ever pretend to a degree of friendly regard which we do not really feel. Not that we can be ever right in avowing enmity; no, for we cannot be right in feeling it. Our rule as Christians is universal love. And it is thus enforced by the apostle: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4. 31, 32.

*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

1. *Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*
2. *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth: a stranger, and not thine own lips.*
3. *A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty: but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.*
4. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous: but who is able to stand before envy?*
5. *Open rebuke is better than secret love.*
6. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*
7. *The fall soul loatheth an incorpore: but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*
8. *As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.*
9. *Ornament and perfume re-*
- joice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.*
10. *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.*
11. *My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.*
12. *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.*
13. *Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.*
14. *He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.*

## LECTURE 1059.

*Of being truly kind and friendly.*

This chapter begins with a very forcible warning against reckoning with certainty on the morrow, and speaking as if we were sure of living till to-morrow comes. We may compare it with the words of St. James, "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Jas. 4. 13. Next follows an admonition against speaking our own praises; which implies also that we ought not so to speak concerning ourselves as to lead others to praise us. Next we are warned how weighty is a fool's wrath; and then, after being taught that "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous," we are asked, "who is able to stand before envy?" as if this were more formidable than anger and wrath. Let us therefore be on our guard against provoking envy. And let us watch that we never harbour envy in our own hearts. Let us remember the case of Joseph and his brethren, and observe to what a length of deceit and cruelty we may be easily led on by envy, if we once allow it to possess our hearts.

We are next told that "open rebuke is better than secret love;"



than love which is so secret as never to express itself, never to make itself felt. And especially this proverb may refer to the love which mourns over a friend's faults in secret, but is without the resolution to rebuke them openly. This is indeed treason to true affection. For "faithful are the wounds of a friend." Profitable are the admonitions of faithful friendship, infinitely to be preferred to the hollow salutations, and the pretended praises of an enemy. Such praises are like the sweetness of the honeycomb to one whose appetite is satisfied, they cloy instead of pleasing, and are to be loathed rather than liked. Whilst the rebukes of a sincere friend, though distasteful to our nature, ought to be like bitter things to one that is hungry, even welcome and sweet. Let us hunger after righteousness, and we shall be thankful to those who tell us of our faults. We shall be glad if we can by any means learn what we need to repent of in order to be forgiven, what we must amend before we can be holy and unblameable in all our life and conversation.

Further we are here taught that a frequent change of our home shews a restless spirit, like that of a bird "that wandereth from her nest;" that the counsel of a kind friend is delightful like "ointment and perfume;" that we must by no means forsake or lose one who is our friend, or father's friend; and that we may sometimes find a friend or neighbour more truly kind than our nearest of kin. Further, the son is called upon to be wise, and thereby gladden his father's heart, and enable him to answer the reproaches cast upon him by a son's misconduct. A prudent man is described as foreseeing evil, and hiding himself out of the way of it, whilst the foolish go forward into the midst of it and are hurt. He that would lend money is recommended to take a pledge, in case the borrower be one who rashly enters into the risk of being surety for a stranger, or for a strange woman. The loud praise of one who takes extraordinary measures to sound the commendations of his friend, may be suspected of evil intentions, and will often be found to have been under the guise of blessing a secret curse in the heart. Let us then praise temperately and quietly. Let us prudently withdraw from evil when we may without dereliction of duty. Let us endeavour to give joy to our parents, if alive, by our upright conduct; nay, and if even they be dead, let us pay this respect to their memory. Let us be faithful to our friends, and count them all the more faithful and kind to us, if they openly tell us of our faults. And instead of wandering from one home to another, and wishing continually to change our employment, or condition, let us stedfastly do our duty in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us.

*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.
- 16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.
- 17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
- 18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.
- 19 As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.
- 20 Hell and destruction are never full: so the eyes of man are never satisfied.
- 21 As the refining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold: so is a man to his praise.
- 22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.
- 23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.
- 24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?
- 25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered.
- 26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.
- 27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

## LECTURE 1060.

*How surely God supplies the world with plenteousness.*

"A contentious woman," is here likened to "a continual dropping in a very rainy day." So constant is the annoyance arising from a perverse temper in women, who by their gentle and soothing disposition ought to be the means of allaying contention, and of softening the more resolute tempers of men. "Whosoever hideth her, hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself." It is no more possible to have such an eye quiet, or to prevent her showing her ill temper, than to suppress the violence of the wind, or the perfume of precious ointment. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The mutual intercourse of friends helps to quicken their intelligence, and to subvert their errors: and thus qualifies a man for greater wisdom in whatever state of life he pleases God to place him. "Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured." One consequence which happens to men in the other. Diligent service shall yield good and good remuneration as surely as a fig tree well attended to yields fruit.

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." The eye is a true indicator of the ether. We find in all

our fellow creatures faculties and feelings corresponding to those which we find within ourselves. So wonderfully has God made all alike in general, and yet each individually distinct! So exactly the same is human nature in all men of all ages and all countries, though human character is diversified so greatly by the influence of climate, of government, of education, and of society, and above all by the knowledge of revealed truth, and by the work of divine grace! "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." How greedy then the heart of man must be; how covetous the soul; if he be as hard to satisfy as all consuming death! "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise;" so is a man put to proof by commendation, which makes the foolish man vain glorious, but prompts the wise man to perseverance in well doing. "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." In the wheat the kernel may be severed from the husk, the flour from the bran; either by grinding in a mill, or by pounding in a mortar. But there are some men so obstinately foolish, that no pains will suffice to cure them of their foolishness. And so our blessed Lord has taught us, that there are some to whom it would be of no more use to give exhortation or instruction in the truth, than if we were to give that which is holy unto dogs, or to cast pearls before swine! See Matt. 7. 6.

In making provision for this world's wants we are profitably reminded at the close of this chapter how much we are indebted for the supply of all our wants to the wonder working power of almighty God. And Solomon here seems to caution us, that there are no other riches to be depended on, like those which arise from the fruitfulness of flocks and herds and herbage. In a country where nearly every one was possessed of land, and engaged in its cultivation, this advice would be all the more appropriate. And they who till the ground, or who keep sheep and cattle, would do well to bear especially in mind, that it is God who gives the increase, and that unless they are diligent, as He here commands them, they have no reason to expect the plenty which He promises to give them. On that plenty all men subsist. By the increase of living creatures, and by the growth and fruitfulness of living plants, the life of all mankind is sustained. Our riches may take wing and fly away. And the treasure which men are tempted to hoard so carefully, may fail at the time when it is most deeply needed. But where man is diligent, God is faithful to supply. Nay, and often as man has been idle, wasteful, and improvident, yet hitherto has the human race not only existed, but increased, and multiplied; hitherto summer and winter, seed time and harvest, have never failed. See Gen. 8. 22.



*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 1 The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.
- 2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.
- 3 A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.
- 4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.
- 5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.
- 6 Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
- 7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.
- 8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.
- 9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.
- 10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in any evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.
- 11 The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.
- 12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.
- 13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

## LECTURE 1061.

*The joy which is felt when the righteous prosper.*

The terrors of an evil conscience make "the wicked flee when no man pursueth." So greatly are their minds distressed with fear. "But the righteous are bold as a lion." So entire is their confidence in God. "For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof." They change frequently, being either displaced by each other in civil strife, or cut off by an early death as a visitation of God for the sin of the people. "But by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged." For as at the request of Abraham, God would have spared Sodom, had but ten righteous men been found in it, so does He still listen to the prayers of his servants. And if our state has been often marvellously preserved, we are probably more indebted for this mercy to the prayers and piety of the devout amongst us, than to the arms of the mighty; we owe it not to those who have this world's wisdom, but to those who are wise unto salvation. "A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food." For the poor, when they oppress their brethren, are apt to make a harder bargain than the rich, and seize for themselves such things as are beneath the

notice of wealthier oppressors. "They that forsake the law praise the wicked;" uphold them and keep them in countenance. "But such as keep the law contend with them;" these are often forced to act in opposition to the wicked, and their actions are such as always to reflect, whether they will or no, a censure on wicked conduct. "Evil men understand not judgment; but they that seek the Lord understand all things." They are enabled "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Eph. 3. 18, 19.

The love of riches is a thing which most frequently turns men aside from seeking after the knowledge of the Lord. And therefore several of the proverbs are directed against this very general propensity. Thus it is written, "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich." And again, "He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor." And again, "The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out." So express is the testimony on record in God's word against the value which men are apt to put on riches. If they belong to a man who is perverse in his ways, they cannot prevent his having the poor upright man preferred to him. If they have been acquired by oppressive dealings or injustice, they are likely to be transferred, in the order of God's providence, to one who will spend them in acts of bounty. And however arrogant a man may be on the strength of being rich, however confident in his own wisdom, he will often be found and be proved to be foolish, by one who has less wealth and better understanding.

To keep the law of God renders the son an honour to his father, proving that the son is wise himself; "but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father." As to him who purposely turns away from hearing the law, of him it is written, "even his prayer shall be abomination." They also are here denounced who cause the righteous to go astray in an evil way; they themselves shall fall into the snare which they have laid for others; "but the upright shall have good things in possession." Further, it is declared that the rejoicing of the righteous is a cause of joy and glorifying; "but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden," men are glad to hide themselves for fear of being ill-used. And not only is there joy when the righteous prosper, but also when the wicked repent. We are assured by our Lord, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15. 10. And the reason is here made manifest. Repentance is our way to forgiveness. And the angels rejoice in our being saved from destruction. For "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

14 Happy *is* the man that *is* not good: for a piece of feareth alway: but he that bread *that* man will transgress. hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

15 *As* a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; *so is* a wicked ruler over the poor people.

16 The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor: *but* he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any* person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is* perverse in *his* ways shall fall at once.

19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.

20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

21 To have respect of persons perish, the righteous increase.

LECTURE 1062.

*Against robbing God of the honour due to Him.*

It may seem strange to say that "the man that feareth alway" is happy; but when we read the latter part of the proverb, "he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief," we perceive that the fear here spoken of is a reverential fear of God, a tenderness of conscience towards Him and his commands. The proverbs which follow relating to wicked and oppressive princes shew us how much misery hence arises to their subjects, and may well lead us to thank God for the liberty we enjoy, under the protection of equitable laws administered by princes ruling according unto right. But neither laws nor rulers, however excellent, can secure the safety of the people, unless they uphold their institutions in their own practice. No man's life can be safe where the people combine to screen the guilty, and take measures to prevent the shedder of blood from falling into the destruction which is his due. This perhaps is the lesson implied in this obscure proverb, "A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him."

Next we are taught that as far as our own conduct is concerned



our way to be safe is to walk uprightly, and that to be perverse in our heart and conduct will ensure our speedy fall; and again, that diligence in tillage leads to plenty, and that following after idle company leads to "poverty enough;" and again, that the faithful are largely blessed by God, whilst they who make haste to grow rich seldom escape guilt in so doing. On which latter subject it is added afterwards, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." And yet how common is this haste in every quarter! How few are content to earn their bread by diligence! How many rather rashly risk encountering the most abject poverty, for the slightest prospect of getting gain without labour, and growing rich without delay! Let us know that this is not the way in which God would have us increase our store. And avoiding all such speculation in our dealings, let us labour diligently, and wait patiently, in that state of life, be it what it may, unto which it has pleased God to call us.

Further, we learn here not to practise "respect of persons," or partiality in our judgment arising from deference to the great. The man who will do thus is of a spirit to be dishonest for a trifle; "for a piece of bread that man will transgress." Very different is he who tells his brother of a fault, and faithfully rebukes him for wrong doing. And greater favour shall such an one find in the end, "than he that flattereth with the tongue." And let not a son think it no robbery to take that which belongs to his father or mother. The sin of stealing in such cases is aggravated by the nearness of relationship; "the same is the companion of a destroyer." What then must we think of him that would rob God? For whom must we be fit companions, if we would rob our heavenly Father of the day which He has set apart for his special service, of the honour which is due to his holy name?

"He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife," for anger usually arises from a man's too high notions of his own importance. But prosperity comes of trusting in the Lord, and with prosperity comes peace. Of all pride none is more foolish than for a man to trust in his own heart, for "the heart is deceitful above all things." Jer. 17. 9. "But whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered," where walking wisely must mean distrusting our own hearts; watching them with caution and suspicion. Plenty and prosperity are here promised also to those who give plentifully to the poor, whilst many a curse is said to await those who turn away their eyes from seeing poverty and their hands from relieving it. Lastly we are reminded that "when the wicked rise, men hide themselves," that is, through fear, and "when they perish, the righteous increase," that is, through a sense of safety. How greatly will they then increase in joy and glory, when the wicked shall have perished from the presence of God for evermore!

*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 1 He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.
- 2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.
- 3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.
- 4 The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.
- 5 A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.
- 6 In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.
- 7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: *but* the wicked regardeth not to know it.
- 8 Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.
- 9 If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest.
- 10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.
- 11 A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.
- 12 If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants *are* wicked.
- 13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the Lord lighteneth both their eyes.

## LECTURE 1063.

*The abuse and use of God's good gifts.*

The first proverb in this chapter is a fearful warning to those who harden their hearts against reproof. And yet how few can bear to be reproofed even by those who have authority to reprove them! But what a difference does it make to the well being of the people, whether those who are in authority to reprove or rule are righteous or are wicked! Much do the joys and sorrows of others depend upon their principles and conduct. And whilst a king who judges uprightly gives confidence and safety to his subjects, a ruler who can be influenced by bribes is the ruin of his people. The truth of these statements is abundantly confirmed by present experience, in those parts of the world where it has long been common to bribe the judges of the land, where nothing is found to act more certainly in improving the condition of the people, than the impartial administration of justice according to law.

But rulers are not the only persons whose righteousness or wickedness has considerable influence on the happiness of others. A son who loves wisdom is his father's joy, but one who keeps evil company both wastes his father's means, and grieves his heart. And the like is true of all relations one with another. Nay, it is true of all with whom we hold any kind of intercourse, that if they be righteous this is good for us, and if they be evil this is

hurtful to us. If it be a flatterer who approaches us, he is spreading a net to ensnare us. There is a snare also in the ill example of every transgressor. And there is an influence for good in the cheerful and happy life of the righteous. His songs of thankfulness and smiles of joy promote the happiness of all around him. And besides this he "considereth the cause of the poor," he gives his mind to the business of doing good; whereas "the wicked regardeth not to know it." A very great difference this is between the one and the other. And great is the good effect which this kind consideration of the righteous has upon the happiness of his poorer neighbours. If his means be small, it makes his alms, however scanty, go much further; or if his wealth and gifts be large, they are made doubly welcome by the personal interest which he shews in the welfare of those to whom he gives them.

The effect of a man's good or evil conduct on the happiness of his neighbours is further set forth in the case of "scornful men," who are said to "bring a city into a snare;" it often happening that a whole state is brought into trouble by the insolent behaviour of some few of its members. "But wise men turn away wrath;" not only are they careful not to provoke it, but by their prudent behaviour they allay it when provoked. Again, "If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest;" neither by serious argument, nor by pleasant mirth, can he convince and satisfy his opponent. Again, "The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul;" yes, they seek the everlasting good of those that hate them, they pray and labour for the souls of those who despitefully use them and persecute them. Again, "a fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it till afterwards." This also makes a great difference to the happiness of his neighbours, so many are the mischiefs which arise from indiscretion in speech. Again, "If a ruler hearken unto lies, all his servants are wicked;" so great is the temptation to falsehood thus laid in their path, so closely is falsehood allied with malice and all kinds of wickedness. Again, "The poor and deceitful man meet together: the Lord lighteneth both their eyes." God makes his sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good, and hence the wicked take occasion to do harm, and the righteous to do good. They have both the like faculties of body, and of mind, and are permitted for a time to use them according to the bent of their respective inclinations. It is a gift of God which the wicked abuse, in every instance of harm which they do unto their neighbours. Happy they who use God's gifts to the end for which He gives them, whose eyes and hands and hearts all work together for the benefit of their brethren, and for the glory of their Maker!



*Proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah.*

- 14 The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.      up his servant from a child shall have him become *his* son at the length.
- 15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.      22 An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.
- 16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.      23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.
- 17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.      24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.
- 18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.      25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.
- 19 A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.      26 Many seek the ruler's favour; but *every* man's judgment cometh from the LORD.
- 20 Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? *there is more* hope of a fool than of him.      27 An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and *he that is upright in the way is* abomination to the wicked.
- 21 He that delicately bringeth

## LECTURE 1064.

*Causes of the abundance of ungodliness.*

Kings are here once more reminded of their duty; and they are assured, that if they judge the poor faithfully, this is the way to have their thrones established permanently. Parents too are again charged to correct their offspring, there being here two proverbs on the subject, one stating that "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame;" and the other being a commandment with a promise annexed, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." An encouraging assurance, and no more than needful to stir up a parent to the painful work of chastising his dear children. They who know how painful a duty this is, must be so much the more inclined to magnify the goodness of the Lord, in chastening every one whom He loves, and in scourging every one whom He receives. See Heb. 12. 6.

The neglect of early training is one of the things which chiefly accounts for the multiplied number of the wicked, and for the corresponding increase of transgression. "But the righteous shall see their fall:" though iniquity abounds there are some which endure unto the end, and these will hereafter witness the

end of the ungodly. Another chief cause of multiplied ungodliness is the lack of due instruction in the revealed will of God; "Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law happy is he." The insubordination of those who are subject to their brethren, either as slaves, which was the case of old time, or as hired servants, which happily is the only servitude practised in these realms, this insubordination is another fruitful source of evil. Another is the indulgence of an irritable temper by the utterance of hasty words. It is wrong therefore to encourage insubordination. It is dangerous to bring up a servant as if he were a son, and so to tempt him to assume the manners and habits of his master's child. And it is mischievous to provoke the anger of others. And as we are likely to do this whenever we give way to anger ourselves, the sins of an angry man are multiplied in number, by reason of those to which he gives provocation being added to those which he commits.

Another chief source of the abundance of iniquity is pride; which leads to a man's falling lower in the end, whilst "honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." Again, conniving at sin in others, or aiding and abetting it, are things which greatly encourage the growth of transgression. He who does this in a court of justice, he who when adjured withholds due information, sins against his own soul for the sake of screening the guilty. And like to this is the case of any man who countenances wickedness, and encourages his brethren in it, either by not plainly telling them of their faults, if this be within his province, or by not avoiding the society of those who notoriously transgress. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," this is that which leads many to do wrong, hinders many in doing right. Happy then they who are set above the fear of man by putting their trust in the Lord. A seeking after the favour of the great is another source of temptation unto many. Happy then they whose dependence is on God's favour, and who act as they who know, that from the Lord proceeds the only judgment which concerns them to all eternity. Such as these must abhor that which the Lord abhors. To them there can be no pleasure in the company of the wicked, but rather pain and aversion thereunto; even as the upright are an abomination to them that are unjust. If then we must needs live in the world, let it be seen that we are not of the world. Let it be felt by any notorious transgressors of God's law, with whom we cannot help sometimes holding intercourse, that whilst we humbly deplore our own unworthiness, we shrink from giving them the slightest countenance in their gross and wilful sins.

*The first part of the words of Agur.*

- 1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,
- 2 Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man.
- 3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.
- 4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?
- 5 Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.
- 6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.
- 7 Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die:
- 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:
- 9 Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and
- take the name of my God in *vain*.
- 10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.
- 11 *There is* a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.
- 12 *There is* a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.
- 13 *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.
- 14 *There is* a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from *among* men.
- 15 The horseleach hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give. There are three *things* that are never satisfied, *yea*, four *things* say not, *It is* enough:
- 16 The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, *It is* enough.
- 17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

## LECTURE 1065.

*Of being contented with moderate things.*

The words of Agur, which he calls "even the prophecy," meaning that they are inspired, commence with a declaration of his own natural incapacity and ignorance. And he proceeds to ask who amongst the children of men can have ascended the heights of heaven, or descended thence? who can have known except by revelation, that which God knows? what man, however highly gifted, can do that which God does, can hold the winds in controul, keep the waters within bounds, and set all parts of the earth in their places? where is the man to be found



that can do these things? Who can tell his name, or his son's name? God being thus matchless in wisdom and power, thus exalted in majesty, thus past finding out, we are bound to receive his revealed word with all reverence, neither adding thereto, nor taking therefrom; we are bound to receive his whole word as pure, good, and profitable unto us, however ignorant, and frail, and full of infirmity the human instruments may be, through whom He vouchsafes to reveal it.

Most instructive is the inspired prayer which the self abasing Agur here urgently puts up to God. Well shall we do to use his words not unfrequently in our own devotions, "Remove from me vanity and lies," this is the first of the two things for which Agur pleads. Let me not be seduced into false doctrine, false religion. Let me not be led away from holding the true faith, as to God, his justice, and his mercy, as to Christ, his redeeming love, as to the Holy Ghost, his sanctifying grace, as to the hatefulness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the deceitfulness of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil, or as to the supreme importance of caring for the soul. Next, "give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me." Place me, and keep me, if it seem good to Thee, O God, in that station of life, which offers the least temptation to transgress.

Agur next describes the risk which a man would run, in being a busy body, and meddling between a bondservant and his master. He then points out four kinds of character, four classes of persons, which it is good to know of, in order that we may be upon our guard, lest we be tempted to be like unto any one of them. Far then be it from us to fail in honouring our parents, much more to do them any kind of dishonour! Far be it from us to provoke the judgment here afterwards denounced against "the eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother!" Far be it from us to be pure in our own eyes, whilst yet we are not washed from our filthiness! Far be it from us to be elated with pride, and lifted up with contempt of others! Far be it from us to be cruel or oppressive, like those "whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men!" Such there are and ever have been, who like the horseleach and her two daughters, cry, "Give, give." Two things, nay three, nay four there are, which resemble the grasping disposition of the covetous, "The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough." Let us then be content with such things as we have. And though we pray to be spared the trial of extreme poverty, let us be aware how much better it would be to be poor and contented, than to be rich and wanting more; to have nothing, and to be as though possessing all things, see 2 Cor. 6. 10, than to have much, and yet feel as if it all were nothing, because there is yet something that we want more.

*The remainder of the words of Agur.*

- 18 There be three *things* which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not :
- 19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.
- 20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.
- 21 For three *things* the earth is disquieted, and for four *which* it cannot bear :
- 22 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;
- 23 For an odious woman when she is married; and an hand-maid that is heir to her mistress.
- 24 There be four *things* which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise :
- 25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;
- 26 The conies *are but* a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks :
- 27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;
- 28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.
- 29 There be three *things* which go well, yea, four are comely in going :
- 30 A lion *which is* strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any ;
- 31 A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom *there is* no rising up.
- 32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth.
- 33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

## LECTURE 1066.

*Various things that may help to humble us.*

It appears to be Agur's object in these proverbial sayings to inculcate humility and lowliness of mind. They who think that they can understand every thing around them are apt to be puffed up with conceit of knowledge. But when we are forced to admit that there are many things above our comprehension, then we feel humbled before Him who made us and all things. There are wonders in the air, and in the flight of birds therein. There are wonders on the earth, and in the movement of the creatures creeping on its surface. There are wonders in the waters, and in the passage of ships through the sea. There are wonders in the nature of all living creatures. Nor is it the least of marvels that man should abuse his allowed enjoyments to sinful purposes, and should even do deeds of most gross wickedness with as little seeming compunction as if they were lawful actions.

Perhaps also it may be with a view to humble us, that Agur mentions how much we are apt to be disquieted by various cases of

inconvenience in domestic and social life. When a bondservant obtains the mastery in a family, when a foolish person prospers and presumes on his prosperity, when a woman whose conduct and manners are hateful obtains the hand of a husband, and when a handmaid takes the place of her mistress after her decease, these are some of the chief troubles which prevailed amongst families in the times of Agur. And the prevalence of troubles like these, the success of those who ought not to succeed, and the annoyance hence ensuing to all around them, these things shew us that our nature is corrupt, and that all the order of our social and domestic system is full of imperfection. And further, it is humbling to our pride, that creatures so small and feeble as ants and rabbits, locusts and spiders, should shew in many points a wisdom not unlike to that of man. And once more, it may serve to make us humble, when we observe the strength, and speed, and majestic gait, of such animals as the lion, the greyhound, and the goat; or when we reflect on the rank and dignity of a king, whose sovereign authority is an apt image of the supreme power and dominion of the Lord God almighty. Before Him the greatest potentates of the earth and the most lowly of their subjects are alike lowly and powerless. And if those who defy God's power, and refuse to submit to his commands, are usually found willing to act in opposition to the authority of their sovereign, this is because their selfish vanity inclines them to reject the thought of there being any one, either in earth or heaven, greater and wiser, better and stronger, than themselves.

At the conclusion of his words, Agur advises those who have fallen into sin by lifting themselves up, or by harbouring evil thoughts, to humble themselves in silent self abasement; "lay thine hand upon thy mouth." Let us not seek in such a case to justify ourselves, as pride would prompt us. Let us not further provoke God's anger by upholding ourselves in sin. Surely as "the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife." And how shall man dare strive with his Maker? Nay, how shall we venture to strive with one another, seeing that God has forbidden us to strive, seeing that all strife, and anger, all malice, and uncharitableness, arises from pride of heart, from that pride which is abomination before God?

May God be pleased to make and keep us humble! May all the marvels with which we are surrounded, all the troubles to which we are liable, may the wisdom of things less than us, and the power of things greater, unite to impress us with the salutary lessons of humility, lowliness, and charity!



*The words of king Lemuel which his mother taught him.*

- 1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.
- 2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my rows?
- 3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.
- 4 *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:*
- 5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.
- 6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.
- 7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.
- 8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.
- 9 Open thy mouth, judge righteousness, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.
- 10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.
- 11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.
- 12 She will do him good and increase of the days of her life.
- 13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.
- 14 She is like the merchants' wives, she bringeth her food afar off.
- 15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.
- 16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands, she planteth a vineyard.
- 17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.
- 18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.
- 19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.
- 20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
- 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet.
- 22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.
- 23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
- 24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
- 25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.
- 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
- 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.
- 28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *alas*, and he praiseth her.
- 29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.
- 30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: *but* a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.
- 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

## LECTURE 1067.

*The character of a virtuous wife.*

It has been thought that Lemuel is another name for Solomon, and that these inspired words were taught him by Bathsheba his mother. The counsel here given was certainly such as Solomon must have greatly needed; for the chief point here enforced is one in regard to which he greatly erred. And whether Lemuel and Solomon were the same person or not, we shall be apt to think, that this counsel in particular is placed at the close of the Book of Proverbs of Solomon, in order to remind us how wide is the difference between knowing our duty and doing it. Let us therefore, at the conclusion of this practical book, call to mind the exhortation of our Lord, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John 13. 17. Let us consider how much more we shall have to answer for, if after we have received such full instruction in wisdom and righteousness, we lead a foolish and wicked life.

In giving advice to king Lemuel, his mother first charges him not to waste his strength upon women, then warns him not to indulge in strong drink, lest it cause him to forget the law, and to pervert judgment; suggesting to her son that wine is suited for cheering the spirits of the sick and sorrowful, not to be used for intoxication by the healthy, and rich, and great; and taking the occasion to urge him to see justice done to his subjects, and especially to be the protector of the helpless, the guardian of the poor and needy. From these exhortations, not only kings and magistrates, but all who have any manner of authority, may learn, how deeply they are bound to use their power for the redressing of wrongs, and for the maintaining of that which is right. And we may further observe upon these words, that whilst wine is most properly applied as a cordial to the sick and dying, we should do well, instead of using it for ourselves in luxury, when not needful for our health, to give it away for the strengthening of the weak, and for the comforting of the distressed.

But the chief point insisted on by the mother of king Lemuel is the great value of a virtuous woman, as a wife and mistress of a family. This is evidently connected with the first head of her advice, "Give not thy strength unto women." It is as though she had said, Instead of following after many women, try to meet with one who is really faithful and affectionate, one in whom the heart of her husband may securely trust, not only for the charge of his property, but also for the requiting of his affections. Such an one we find here described at length. And these particulars of a good wife's character are such as suited the habits of the time and country in which Lemuel and his mother lived. They were well adapted, as here set forth under the guidance of inspiration, to incline the heart of the youthful king, to choose t<sup>1</sup>

holy state of being wedded to one wife, in preference to the practice, long prevalent in the East, of having several wives and concubines. Happily no such evil practice prevails amongst us. Nor are the particulars of duty, in which a good wife shewed forth her good qualities of old time, the same as those which suit our notions now. But industry and frugality, discretion and kindness of speech, together with warmth of affection in the heart, are excellent alike in every age and every clime. And these good qualities, under any circumstances, unite to render a virtuous woman an inestimable treasure to her husband.

Of such a wife we may still truly say, "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." The constancy of her affection is such that nothing can shake it, nothing prevent its active exercise, until death sever the marriage bond. By her diligence his means are made to go further, instead of being wasted by extravagance and sloth. They are made to minister to the benefit of all around her, her husband, and his children, and servants, and the poor and needy in his neighbourhood. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Again, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Her speech is discreet and uniformly kind: not wise in the worldly acceptance of the term, not savouring of the wisdom of the world, but at once wise and charitable, prudent, yet meek, gentle, and forbearing. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." No other praise does she desire upon earth: no public note of commendation would be welcome to the ears of one, whose sphere of duty centres in her home. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." Such is the praise of her admiring husband, such is the firm conviction of his mind, such the glad testimony of his lips. And what is it that draws forth his ardent praise, and engages his continual affection? Not beauty, but goodness, not gracefulness of the outward form, but the grace of God in the soul; "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised." Piety towards God is the only sure foundation for constancy of affection, and dutifulness of conduct, in a wife towards her husband. And the wife, whose affection and duty to her husband are a part of her devotion towards God, may have the happiness of hoping to have praise of the Lord. That Saviour, to whom her soul is wedded, will give her in another world the fruit of her good works done here. And when the everlasting gates shall again lift up their heads, for the King of glory to come in, among the countless multitude of his saints who shall enter with Him into heaven, it shall redound to the eternal commendation of many a holy woman there, to have been here a virtuous wife.



## ECCLESIASTES; OR, THE PREACHER.

1—2.

*The Preacher declareth that all is vanity.*

1 The words of the Preacher, 2 Vanity of vanities, saith the  
the son of David, king of Jeru- Preacher, vanity of vanities; all  
salem. is vanity.

### LECTURE 1068.

*Against setting our affections on things below.*

Amongst a great variety of opinions as to the general object of this book, we shall probably do right in considering it as a treatise on human happiness; wherein Solomon first demonstrates the vanity of those earthly pursuits, in which most men seek the means of being happy, and then recommends the more excellent way of fearing God, and keeping his commandments. See ch. 12. 13. Many think that it was composed by Solomon after his falling away from God; and then take it for a proof, that he had effectually repented. It would however prove no more than that he saw the error of his ways. And many do this, who nevertheless are not changed in heart, not renewed in spirit. And as God often now uses the testimony of dying sinners to warn those around them of the vanity and misery of sin, even when their compunction is not followed by contrition, penitence, and faith; so it might have been the case with Solomon, however much we may wish and hope to the contrary, that without being truly converted unto God, he was thoroughly convinced of his past foolishness in serving sin, and was inspired to leave his convictions upon record, for the benefit of the church for ever.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This is his first general position. Not that God would hereby put us out of conceit with the life that now is; provided we view it aright, and use it as we ought according to his will. But if we enter upon the pursuit of worldly objects in a worldly spirit, if we set our affections on things below to the neglect of things above, if we look on this life as our home, instead of as a journey, and that often a very short one, to a better country; then all is vanity, is vanity of vanities, the most vain thing possible, the most unsatisfactory, the most full of disappointment. It disappoints us in the pursuit. We seek, and find not. We labour and get not. We traffick and gain not. It disappoints us in the possession. We get, and find no gain. We possess, and experience no pleasure. Or we are pleased, but not for long. That which we delight in lasts not. It is taken from us, or we from it. And they whose delights altogether arise from the transitory things of earth, are in momentary danger of their coming to an end, to be succeeded by woe everlasting.

*The Preacher sheweth the vanity of labour and knowledge.*

3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? *things that are to come with those that shall come after.*

4 *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. 12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. 13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. 15 *That which is* crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

8 All things *are* full of labour: man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. 16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

9 The thing that hath been, *it is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. 17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

10 Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

11 *There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of

## LECTURE 1069.

*In what cases labour and knowledge are not vain.*

When we find ourselves too deeply interested in the affairs of this transitory life, we have a suitable warning at hand in these words of "the Preacher," who "was king over Israel in Jerusalem." Let us ask ourselves, what profit now have the men of former generations in matters about which they were as anxious in their times, as we are tempted to be in ours? The earth on which they dwelt abides. But they, and all their cares, are alike come to an end. The sun still rises and still sets, the winds and

waters keep their courses as of old, and running to and fro return continually to whence they first set out. But man returns no more. Busy as he is whilst here, and full of deep importance as all his own affairs appear to him, and endless as are the schemes that occupy his mind, enough to last him many a life ere half could be fulfilled, yet all is as nothing when his one short life is over. It is no more than others have felt and done before him, and others will feel and do after him; others, in whose doings and whose feelings he feels no more interest than they in his. Thus there is nothing really new with all this stir; nothing that will be remembered, thought of, cared for, in connexion with the memory of those who did it; nothing, or at least so little, that though very many try, there is scarcely one out of many a million of mankind, who succeeds in leaving a name behind him, or in exciting a general and lasting interest in that for which he may have laboured all his life. "What profit" then "hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" We answer, none, unless he labour for eternity; none, unless he be fervent in spirit as serving the Lord; none, unless he be one of those, concerning whom it is testified, that at their death they "rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Rev. 14. 13.

But Solomon had been distinguished by his laborious study of the works of nature. He had also taken pains to make himself acquainted with the affairs of all the nations of the world, and with the nature of man and of man's mind. In short, he had deeply studied that which we call science, as well as philosophy, and history. He had spent much time in these pursuits. He had made much progress, and had become eminent above all men that ever were for his proficiency in them. He had gotten himself a name, which drew together unto him hearers and admirers from all parts of the world; and which has continued, and will continue in all ages, a name notable for wisdom of this kind. At a period when the advantages of philosophy and science are apt to be overrated, it may be well to lay to heart this wise man's testimony, or rather God's testimony recorded by his lips, "I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit." Yes, if it be pursued only for its own sake, or only for the sake of the worldly gain, or the worldly distinction, which it is likely to confer, then "in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." As we enlarge the circle of the things we know, we enlarge the circumference of things unknown, by which it is ever bounded. And it is only when we look through God's works up unto Himself, when we view them according to his word as manifesting his power, wisdom, and goodness, then it is, and then only, that whilst we grow in knowledge we grow in joy, and become at once wiser, and better, more holy, heavenly, and happy.



*The Preacher sheweth the vanity of a life of pleasure.*

- 1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity.
- 2 I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?
- 3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.
- 4 I made me great work; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:
- 5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits:
- 6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:
- 7 I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:
- 8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts.
- 9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.
- 10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.
- 11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun.

## LECTURE 1070.

*The great loss of living an ungodly life.*

Here are two other ways of living a worldly life tried, and found wanting. The first mentioned is a life of riotous pleasure. "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure." Some there are in every rank of life who say thus to themselves, men of pleasure as they are called; men who make pleasure the whole business of life; seeking it at all costs all day long and every day, even at the cost of substance, character, health, life, and life eternal. "Behold, this also is vanity." They seek, but find not. Their laughter, what is it but madness? Their mirth, what good does it do them? Beneath the outside show of merriment they hide an aching heart. And conscience, though they stifle its reproaches for a time, is, as they are well aware, only gathering the greater strength, to condemn them to all eternity.

But there is another kind of worldly life here mentioned; it is when the pursuit of worldly pleasure is combined with the exer-

cise of worldly wisdom. It is when men refrain from riotous excess, such as is discreditable to character, ruinous to health, and injurious to property; but refrain merely out of a prudent calculation, that they may enjoy the world more, and for a longer period, by a more moderate and respectable but still worldly kind of life. Such as these at once give themselves to sensual pleasure, and study the improvement of their minds. They make great progress in knowledge, and they at the same time make great proficiency in luxury. If of royal rank, like Solomon, they enjoy every thing that can be procured for them by the treasures and privileges peculiar to kings. If nobles, or of wealth like that of noblemen, they vie with each other, and almost with the princes of the realm, in the splendour of their houses, furniture, and feasts, in the extent of their domains, and in the multitude of their retainers. If poor, though their enjoyments are fewer in number, still they study to secure every enjoyment that they can. They are alike incapable of self denial; they withhold not their heart from any joy. And whether rich or poor, they are alike worldly wise as well as worldly minded. And not only so, but they frequently endeavour at the same time to secure, as they suppose, some provision for eternity. They would fain serve God and mammon. They would fain receive the wages of both. And they hold it good policy to be covetous, sensual, and selfish, as long as they can enjoy the fruit of these sins, and yet to give just so much attendance on the outward ordinances of religion, as may pave the way for their easier entrance into heaven, when they can enjoy this world no longer.

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” Such is the testimony of Solomon as to this worldly wise, sensual, and ungodly kind of life. It yields no profit in the end. All the years spent in making provision for the flesh are wasted and lost. The flesh must notwithstanding die. And at the hour of death what will it be the better for all it has enjoyed? How can it fail hereafter to fare all the worse? Not only is there no profit in a life like this; there is loss, infinite loss. God has been dishonoured. His good gifts have been abused. They have been sought after greedily. They have been received unthankfully. They have been enjoyed inordinately. And He Himself, the gracious Giver, has been forgotten. But He cannot be so forgotten with impunity. He will not give an eternity of heaven to them who live a worldly life. He will not fail to put to endless shame those, who whilst they enjoy life through his bounty, make not the least attempt to use it to his glory.

*The Preacher sheweth the vanity of amassing for others.*

12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can* the man do that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done.

13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

14 The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity.

16 For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man*? as the fool.

17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all

my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity.

20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

21 For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil.

22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

24 *There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God.

25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?

26 For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

## LECTURE 1071.

*The duty of enjoying thankfully God's good gifts.*

The testimony of Solomon as to the vanity of a worldly life is all the more weighty, as he here observes, on account of his own remarkable experience: "what can the man do that cometh after



the king? even that which hath been already done." Already he had enjoyed the utmost eminence of power and of wisdom. And infinitely as he had found wisdom better than folly, even "as far as light excelleth darkness," yet he had felt that wisdom could not by itself give happiness, could not exempt the wise from those troubles and calamities, which are the common lot of all men. "One event happeneth to them all." To die, and to be forgotten is the doom of every one. A reflexion most painful to any man, whose views and hopes extend no further than this present world, enough to make life seem to such an one worthless, grievous, hateful.

And at death what is to become of all which here we labour to possess, all which by our labour we have here amassed? The wise man's son may prove a fool. The good man's heir may be one that is ungodly. This again is a consideration fraught with bitter regret, to a man who has given all his time, and the whole energy of his mind, to the making a fortune, or raising an estate. And not only to the rich does this apply, but also to the poor man, if his heart be set on riches; if his affections be engrossed by his worldly substance, so as that he has put his soul in jeopardy for the sake of it. That substance, be it much or little, he cannot take with him when he departs hence. That for which he has risen up early, and laboured hard all day, must at his death belong to some one else; unless indeed he has laboured as serving the Lord, unless he has laboured "not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." John 6. 27.

This uncertainty as to what will become of our goods when we die, is one reason among many for enjoying the fruit of our labour whilst we live, in moderation, and with contentment; instead of labouring to amass that which others will probably waste. But it is only God who can give us the heart to act thus wisely, joyfully, and thankfully. This Solomon could testify from his own experience. Such at least is probably the meaning of a passage, which many think might be better otherwise translated. As it stands in our version, it teaches us this useful practical lesson, that we ought to enjoy thankfully, as well as to labour diligently; not indeed to waste prodigally, not to consume selfishly; but neither on the other hand to heap up wealth for wealth's sake. For this is God's judgment on the sinner; who, himself serving mammon, is thus made to labour for the benefit of those, who use their means to God's glory, and enjoy them with thanks to Him.

*The Preacher dwelleth on the times and seasons of things.*

- 1 To every thing there is a boureth?  
 season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
- 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is planted*;
- 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
- 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.
- 9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?
- 10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.
- 11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.
- 12 I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life.
- 13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, *it is* the gift of God.
- 14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him.
- 15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

## LECTURE 1072.

*Of looking forward from time to eternity.*

The vanity of things earthly is here further shewn by this consideration, that they have each their season, a time, and only a time, a transitory time, and no more. We are born, and enjoy life; but behold, there is "a time to die." We plant, but there is a time when that which grows up must be cut down. And so it is with whatsoever we do, whatsoever we purpose, whatsoever we feel, desire, or care for, after a while we are just as deeply engaged in something very different, often the very opposite. Hence we may reasonably ask, "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?" How vain a thing it is in man to set his affection one day so earnestly and exclusively, upon that which on another day he is likely to disregard altogether!

To be engrossed with these things, to have the heart bent upon them, to value them as the end of our existence, or as the

proper sources of our chief happiness, this is vain, foolish, sinful. Rightly viewed, they are the means of preparing our souls for the happiness of life eternal. The object for which God has made all these things around us, in all their beauty, and has appointed us to have so much to do with them, is that we should be exercised therewith. It is to prove us, and to try what is in our hearts, whether we will fear Him, love Him, and obey Him. He has so presented the things of this world to our minds, and so adapted our minds to them, that whilst we are able to admire and enjoy them, we cannot with our utmost study find out the secret of their workmanship. All this has God done to give us pleasurable employment here. But at the same time He has forbidden us to make idols of these things in our hearts. He has warned us that they are but for times and seasons. He has declared that they shall all be suddenly destroyed. He has charged us to use them as not abusing them, to employ them in doing good all the days of our life, and to enjoy them with thankfulness of heart towards Him, by whose good gift it comes to pass, that even in this transitory world, so much of pleasure is connected with every day's employment and refreshment.

But how different from ours are both the work and the rest of God himself? In eternity that which is good and full of joy is never out of season. With God is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1. 17. And we, in these revolving scenes, amongst which we pass our few short years, ought to have our hearts bent on the enjoyment of Him, who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Heb. 13. 8. In eternity we shall have to answer for that which we do and enjoy in time. "God requireth that which is past." And if He has revealed to us the perfect and eternal nature of his own work and being, this is in order "that men should fear him." Whilst therefore we thankfully enjoy the things of time, let us beware of setting our hearts upon them sinfully. Whilst we run with cheerfulness the race which is set before us, let us be constantly looking forwards to a better state of being, in which there is no change of times or seasons, but all is always good.



*The Preacher declares man's mortality.*

16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there: and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them:

as the one dieth, so dieth the other: yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

20 All go into one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

## LECTURE 1073.

*Better things than those of earth are awaiting us.*

In looking around on earth for something not liable to the charge of vanity, the Preacher refers to "the place of judgment," and to "the place of righteousness." Whether it be the sovereign seated on the throne, or the magistrate in due subordination administering the law as the deputy of the sovereign, there we might well expect to find something that is true, just, and permanent, principles which no lapse of time can alter, no change of circumstances can shake. But imperfection awaits us everywhere on earth. The very best institutions of government, however much they contribute to the happiness of man, as far as they are divine, yet, being administered by frail and fallible beings, often painfully remind us of the Preacher's observation, that wickedness is there. And of the church this is true as well as of the state; of "the place of righteousness," the company of believers in Christ, in all whose professed laws, and acts, and history, one might expect to find truth, unity, peace, piety, indifference to the world, and devotedness to heaven. Yet, alas, iniquity is there also. Well may we conclude with Solomon, that the end is not yet, that a day of retribution for all these things is at hand: "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work." O God, let the imperfection of the best of things on earth make us not the less thankful for that in them which is good, but all the more earnestly desirous to attain unto that heaven, in which iniquity can find no entrance!

The Preacher next seems to express a wish concerning the sons of men, that God might make them aware of their mortality; "that they might see that they themselves are beasts," that is to say, mortal, like all the brute creation round about them. "For that which befallerth the sons of men befallerth beasts; even one thing befallerth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast;" that is to say, no preeminence in this respect, no exemption from the penalty of death. "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." No difference is at present to be seen between the lot of one and of the other at death. Corruption overtakes both alike. The breath of life seems to be the same in both. And when it is breathed for the last time, who can discern between "the spirit of man that goeth upwards," man breathing with his countenance erect, and "the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Certainly no one, without the help of revelation from God, could discover how great a difference there is. And certainly, until life and immortality were brought to light in the Gospel, the enjoyment of this present world, the temperate and thankful enjoyment of the good things which God gives us here, might be justly rated higher than we should be disposed to rate it now. And the possession of these good things in abundance might be properly esteemed a much more sure token, than now it is, of God's favour towards man.

But we have been brought to see that which shall be after us. Thanks be unto our Saviour, we have been taught by the sure word of the Gospel that our souls die not, and that our bodies though they die shall be made alive again, and that if we live by faith in Him we shall not die eternally. Though therefore we believe, that God our Maker is well pleased to see us happy here, we perceive that there is some better thing awaiting us hereafter. And our chief joy is not in that which now we get, by labouring for "the meat which perisheth," but in that which we hope to obtain, by labouring for "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." John 6. 27. Make us sensible, O heavenly Father, that this, like every good thing else, is not the fruit of work of ours, but rather thy most gracious gift! Make us glad to think, that whatsoever good we do, for whatsoever end, it is not we who do it, but Christ and his Holy Spirit dwelling in us! See Phil. 4. 13; 2 Tim. 1. 14.

*The Preacher sheweth many cases of vanity.*

1 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter.

2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

3 Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

4 Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.

5 The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

6 Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit.

7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

8 There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saith he*, For

whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail.

9 Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up.

11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*?

12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

13 Better *is* a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.

14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh poor.

15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

16 *There is* no end of all the people, *even* of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

## LECTURE 1074.

*Our advantage in having a settled monarchy.*

Solomon here first returns to the consideration of the harm done to mankind by injustice and oppression. See ch. 3. 16. And reflecting on the great amount of misery hence arising, he feels life itself a burden, seeing that we cannot live without witnessing such intolerable wrongs. That is to say, it would be so, if there were no other redress to be obtained but such as comes of the help of man. In the next chapter he tells us not to marvel at



the present impunity of oppressors; "for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they." Ch. 5. 8. But if we confine our view to this life, the prevalence of oppression in nearly all countries and ages of the world is a circumstance which largely interferes with all plans of mere earthly happiness.

Besides being oppressed, we are liable to be envied, in proportion to our success in life. "This is also vanity and vexation of spirit." And the foolish and idle, who do nothing for a livelihood, may hence seem to have some ground of reason for saying, as they are apt to say in their own defence, that they are better off with a little, giving themselves no trouble, than those who with much weariness have gained much. Another striking instance of vanity in a worldly life, is when a man labours incessantly to amass a fortune, though he has neither child nor relation to whom to bequeath it. Strange that such an one should not ask himself the question, "For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good?" Well may such a case remind us, how many are the advantages and comforts of our being united by domestic ties, how much better are two than one, for enjoyment in plenty and prosperity, as well as for mutual help and comfort in want and in adversity.

One more case of vanity is set forth at the close of this chapter, in a passage of doubtful interpretation. It seems to refer to the instability of the throne of kings. And it may probably allude to some particular instance, in which an aged and wilful monarch had been supplanted by one born in poverty, but gifted with wisdom, and advanced from a prison to a palace. And there might perhaps, be some other instance had in view, in which a second son had risen up, and had been supported by the multitude of the people, instead of the rightful heir; and yet had afterwards lost his popularity. Such revolutions have frequently occurred in the ill ordered governments, which have generally prevailed in the eastern parts of the world. Happily amongst ourselves the legitimate succession to the crown of the realm is felt to be of great importance to the national prosperity. And independently of our temporal advantage, we have learnt from the word of God, that it is a part of our duty to Him, to honour the person of our sovereign, and to preserve unimpaired the hereditary rights of those who by his ordinance reign over us.

*The Preacher warneth us against vanities in our worship.*

- 1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.
- 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.
- 3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.
- 4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.
- 5 Better *is it* that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.
- 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?
- 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are also divers vanities*: but fear thou God.

## LECTURE 1075.

*Of making good our vows unto God.*

Even in divine worship there may be vanity, for there may be formality and hypocrisy, there may be inattention, distraction of thought, rashness in making a vow before God, and prevarication in excusing the failing to do that which has been vowed. And therefore Solomon here charges us, "keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." This was spoken especially of the temple services, and of listening to the reading of the law. But it may be well applied as a rule for our behaviour in the services of our church. From the moment of our setting foot in God's house we ought to exercise more than common watchfulness over our thoughts and over our whole behaviour, that there may be no irreverence, no failure of attention; but that we may join with heart and mind in every part of the divine service, whether in confession, prayer, or praise, as well as that we may lay to heart every portion of God's word which we hear read out of his book, and all that is taught us by his ministers agreeably thereto.

The next precept seems to refer to the prayers which each worshipper in the temple was at liberty to offer up for himself. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words." That is to say, as a great pressure of business is apt to cause various and incoherent dreams, so it is

foolishness in the mind, a crowd of foolish and vain thoughts, that prompts a man to utter a multitude of words in worshipping before one so great as God. And in like manner our blessed Lord has taught us, saying, "when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Matt. 6. 7. It is not by the length, but by the solemn reverence, and devout fervour, of our devotions, that we must seek to obtain the things for which we pray. It is not by making as it were fine speeches in our prayers that we can hope to prevail with God, but by addressing Him in such a tone as becomes creatures of the earth, applying to One who dwells in heaven. "Therefore let thy words be few." Let us say what we have to say in the most simple and unaffected language, not as if we were studying to persuade by flowers of eloquence, but as if we were striving to prevail by earnestness of heart.

The next precept plainly points to the practice of making vows unto God; on which subject it is thus written in the book of Numbers: "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." Num. 30. 2. That this practice was apt to be abused appears plain from the precautions enacted in the Law against abusing it. See Lev. 27. But if a man might err in vowing beyond his ability to make good, consistently with his other obligations, how much greater was the error of attempting to evade the obligation of the vow! How vain a thing must this be, to promise unto God by way of pleasing Him, and then to decline performing our promise! Far be it from us to pretend that we are not bound by the vows which have been laid upon our souls, by the solemn covenant made for us in our infancy with God, by means of the sacrament of baptism! Far be it from us to question the obligation of that covenant, when we ought to be employed in fulfilling its terms! No; let us feel bound by our vows, and at the same time let us enjoy our privileges. We stand pledged to repent and to believe. And God, let us thank Him for it, God has promised to be merciful to us, and forgive us our sins; He has promised to give us grace that we may sin no more. May He incline our hearts to pay that which has been vowed in our behalf; nay rather to take our vows upon ourselves, and so with cheerful and thankful hearts to pay that which we have vowed!



*The Preacher sheweth the vanity of great wealth.*

8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for *he that is higher than the highest regardeth*; and *there be higher than they*.

9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himself* is served by the field.

10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: *this is also vanity*.

11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes?

12 The sleep of a labouring man *is sweet*, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

13 There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there is nothing* in his hand.

15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

16 And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and *he hath* much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

18 Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is* good and comely *for one* to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for *it is* his portion.

19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is* the gift of God.

20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

## LECTURE 1076.

*Of enjoying thankfully but not selfishly.*

We are here charged not to marvel when we see oppression and injustice practised, and seemingly with impunity. We are not to marvel, as if we thought it strange, that God should permit it thus to be. We may feel assured, that He takes note of every thing, and will prove Himself in the end to be higher than the highest, mighty to bring to judgment the mightiest offenders. And what vanity is this, that men should put their souls in jeopardy for the sake of gold and silver, and the various good things which gold and silver purchase! Do what they will, "the

profit of the earth is for all," and the monarch has this in common with his meanest subject, both are fed, are clothed, and have all their wants supplied, out of that which the earth yields to all in common. Some indeed appropriate to themselves so large a share of these good things, as that there is little or nothing left for others to possess. But then they themselves cannot consume beyond a certain limit. They may hoard, but in that case they are never satisfied. Or they may give or spend on others, whose wants are thus supplied, without their being troubled with the cares of property, whose hard earned meals are often more heartily enjoyed than their master's sumptuous feasts, and whose sleep after their hard day's work is usually both sound and sweet, whilst he in his abundance lies restlessly awake.

What a vanity then is this for a man to amass riches to his hurt, to possess property to an extent, which interferes with his enjoyment of those very things, of which his property gives him an unlimited command! What a sore evil are "riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt!" And how frequently do such fortunes come to nothing, "perish by evil travail," so that the son of the rich man has "nothing in his hand!" Or if the wealth be not taken from its owner, the owner must be taken from the wealth; he must go out of the world naked as he came into it; unable to carry with him the least portion of those riches for which he has laboured all his life, and for the sake of saving which he may perhaps have denied himself the refreshment needful to his health, and the medicine that might have cured his sickness. Surely it is better to enjoy with thankfulness the goods which God bestows, than thus to hoard them to no purpose. It is better to rejoice in our labour, and to partake of those pleasures which God allows and invites us to partake of here; provided we set not our hearts upon them, provided we use them no further than we may view them as God's gift. This was especially a duty under the Old Testament; the Law having the promise of the life that now is, and commanding the people to rejoice before the Lord as they feasted on the good of the land. See Deut. 12. 12, 18. The gospel also would teach us to enjoy thankfully, whilst it charges us not to do any thing selfishly. But under the gospel we learn to give less heed to the enjoyments of this present life. And forgetting those things which are behind, we press towards the mark, for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. See Phil. 3. 13, 14.

*The Preacher sheweth the vanity of possessions not enjoyed.*

- 1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men : sand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good : do not all go to one place ?
- 2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it : this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.
- 3 If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial ; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.
- 4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.
- 5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing : this hath more rest than the other.
- 6 Yea, though he live a thou-
- 7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.
- 8 For what hath the wise more than the fool ? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living ?
- 9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire : this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.
- 10 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man : neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.
- 11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better ?
- 12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow ? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun ?

## LECTURE 1077.

*All worldly plans of life are vain alike.*

Nothing can more plainly shew the vanity of earthly goods, than that it is no uncommon case for a man to possess them in abundance, and yet not have the heart to use or to enjoy them. This proves that the things in themselves are vain ; and that the pleasure arising from the use of them is the gift of God ; a gift which He bestows most largely on those, who use them most according to his will. And where this gift is withheld, it matters not how much a man may have, or how long he may live, or how many children may be born to him. All these circumstances of outward prosperity are nothing, without the thankful and joyful heart. And if in the midst of plenty the soul remains dissatisfied and discontented, then it were better for that man that he had not been born alive ; then the child that is born dead before its time is "better than he." If there be no enjoyment in either case, there is no advantage in length of years, but rather a



disadvantage in continuance of trouble. And death overtakes both alike in the end, though the one much sooner than the other.

Another striking instance of vanity is this, that "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled." However hard a man may work, and however amply he may supply himself with food, still in a few hours he must be supplied again; his hunger craving for renewed supplies, notwithstanding all his pains to satisfy it. The wise man and the fool here stand in the same case; no wisdom availing to exempt us from the necessity of thus continually recruiting our strength and life. Nor is there herein any difference between the rich and the poor; except that they who have much are the most apt to desire more than they have, and instead of being content with "the sight of the eyes," are disturbed by "the wandering of the desire."

"That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he." This obscure verse, if rightly thus translated, may perhaps be a kind of summing up of all that has been said previously in the book, to this effect: The practices and notions prevalent among men have now been set forth, and it has been shewn that they are such as might be expected of a being so vain as man; who in his pursuit of happiness, is apt to regard the creature more than the Creator; and who often foolishly contends against the appointments of his Maker. But to how little purpose does he thus contend! "What is man the better" for thus following the devices and desires of his own heart? And who that looks only to such means of happiness as these, who can tell "what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?" Or again, who can promise him the satisfaction, if it be one, of being blest with a fair name, or with a prosperous family, after he has himself been summoned hence by death? "who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun." Lord, let us place our happiness in Thee, and then all is no longer vanity. Lord, let us take delight in doing thy will and hoping to enjoy thy glory; and then whether we abound or want, whether we live or die, we know that we have that which is good for us here, and shall have that which is good for us hereafter.

*The Preacher setteth forth the right way.*

1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

2 *It is* better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that *is* the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.

5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool: this also *is* vanity.

7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

8 Better *is* the end of a thing

than the beginning thereof: *and* the patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

10 Say not thou, What *is* the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance: and *by it* there *is* profit to them that see the sun.

12 For wisdom *is* a defence, *and* money *is* a defence: but the excellency of knowledge *is*, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

13 Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which he hath made crooked?

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

## LECTURE 1078.

*The advantage of viewing things wisely.*

After dwelling on the vanity of all merely worldly plans of happiness, the Preacher begins in this chapter to set forth a better way, to point out what notions we ought to entertain, and what objects to pursue, if we would enjoy the best of happiness which this life can afford. "A good name," he tells us, "is better than precious ointment." Not merely worldly reputation, but the esteem of the good, the fragrance of this is more lasting, and more valuable, than that of the most costly perfume. "And the day of death" is better "than the day of one's birth;" because the labour of life is now over, the race is run, and henceforth there remains the crown of glory to be enjoyed. "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men," namely, sickness and death; "and the living will lay it to his heart." As men cannot escape death, it must be good for them to be made to consider

their latter end. For a like reason, "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." And to put the same important truth in another point of view, "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." Oh let us then go with willing steps to scenes of sorrow and of death. Let us receive with meekness the chastening of the Lord, or the rebukes of the wise amongst our brethren; knowing that the mirth of fools is vanity, whereas the profit of being humble, serious, and wise, is great, and is eternal.

It is an important point of true wisdom to be not hasty in spirit, not prone to anger, but to be patient rather than irritable and proud. Oppression is indeed apt to make even a wise man furious with wrath. And a bribe prevailing against a just cause is so vexatious, that it is not unlikely to break the heart of the person oppressed. But let us wait to see the end. In due season all wrongs will be redressed. And it becomes us in the meantime to continue patient in well doing, yea, even to rejoice when we suffer wrongfully. Near akin to pride and wrath is the spirit which prompts men to complain of the times they live in, as if worse than those which went before. The fault is not in the times, but in themselves, and in their conceit of being wiser and better than those amongst whom they live; a conceit which makes them in comparison more unwise and worse.

As to worldly possessions, they are doubtless conducive to many excellent uses, provided they are combined with wisdom. There is profit thereby "to them that see the sun." That is to say, as long as we are alive here, they help to our enjoyment. They serve for our defence against want. And when wisely used, they may be made to redound to God's glory, and to our own eternal gain. Thus as "wisdom is a defence," so also "money is a defence." But money without wisdom has been shewn to be mere vanity. Whereas wisdom, even without wealth, "giveth life to them that have it." Let us therefore seek first and foremost divine wisdom. And let us wisely regard whatsoever lot God gives us here, as the gracious dispensation of his providence; in which it is our duty to acquiesce, and to be thankful. If we have prosperity, let us enjoy it with gratitude to Him who gives it. If we have adversity, let us lay to heart the chastisements of the Lord, assured that He afflicts us for our good! "God also hath set the one against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him;" God has so chequered our lot with good and evil, that we have in no case any reason to complain. Prosperity and adversity, each has its proper use. Abundance and want, good report and evil report, health and sickness, life and death, all in their turn, if welcomed as the ordinance of God, all are found to be seasonable and good.



*The Preacher sheweth the conclusions of wisdom.*

- 15 All *things* have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just *man* that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked *man* that longeth *his life* in his wickedness.
- 16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?
- 17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?
- 18 *It is good* that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.
- 19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty *men* which are in the city.
- 20 For *there is not* a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.
- 21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou bear thy servant curse thee:
- 22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.
- 23 All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it *was* far from me.
- 24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?
- 25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of *things*, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness *and* madness:
- 26 And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, *and* her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.
- 27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, *counting* one by one, to find out the account:
- 28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.
- 29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

## LECTURE 1079.

*The universal corruption of human nature.*

The Preacher, speaking of the days of his vanity, perhaps means the period when he regarded things with a worldly mind, without the light and guidance of divine revelation. He had seen the just man dying in his righteousness, and the wicked man living on in his wickedness. And he may possibly be expressing the reflexions which he made upon these cases, as an uninspired man, when he says, "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" But it is by divine authority that he rather thus advises us: "Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that

feareth God shall come forth of them all." Let us then withdraw our hand from all worldly practices, let us renounce all faithless, foolish fear of being "righteous overmuch." Or if we take the words for an inspired warning against overstrained scruples of conscience, let us be no less watchful against a danger much more imminent, the risk lest our consciences be not as scrupulous, not as tender, as they ought to be.

One whose conscience is overscrupulous is called by St. Paul, "the weak brother." 1 Cor. 8. 11. And here wisdom is said to strengthen the wise. And we are warned that there is no man absolutely sinless, as if to guard us from despondency in sin, though certainly not to discourage us in aiming at obeying the precept of our Lord, "Be ye therefore perfect." Matt. 5. 48. And it is against an infirmity of the same kind as a weakly conscience, that we are warned in the following exhortation: "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." To be too sensitive to reproach, and to listen to what we had better not hear, only exposes us to needless pain. And we must be aware that we ourselves often say of others that which we should not wish them to overhear. "For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others."

All this, the Preacher says, he had proved by wisdom. When he said, "I will be wise," wisdom was far from him. When wise in his own conceit, he was foolish. When he applied his heart to the search after knowledge, and especially to know "the wickedness of foolishness," not merely its vanity in regard to man, but also its sinfulness in the sight of God, then he was enlightened to know how bitter, "more bitter than death," is the woman, "whose heart is snares and nets." Then he found that this was one of the most prevailing sins into which the wicked fall; whilst God preserves from this temptation those who please Him. Then he observed further, that it was hard to find either a man or woman, and least of all the latter, in those times, whose heart was right with God. For though God at the first made man upright, all have since gone far astray, and all have followed the devices and desires of their own hearts. Thus does true wisdom teach us the fall of man, and the gross corruption of our nature. Thus duly warned how far we have gone from original righteousness, let us pray God to renew us day by day, that we through the power of the Holy Ghost may grow in grace, and may be conformed to the image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*The Preacher dwelleth in the uncertainty of time.*

1 Who is as the wine man? therefore the misery of man is and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.

2 I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.

3 Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing: for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.

4 Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What dost thou?

5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment,

7 For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

8 There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

9 All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.

10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.

## LECTURE 1080.

*The wisdom of planning for eternity.*

As a proof of how much wisdom tends to happiness, it is said to make the face to shine. It lightens up the countenance with an intelligent expression. And if it be true heavenly wisdom, this expression is such as indicates kindness, meekness, gentleness, and love. Instead of that fierce boldness, which appears in the looks of the ignorant and proud, it may be seen in the face of the truly wise man, that he stands in awe of God, and that he delights in doing good to his fellow creatures.

Amongst the counsels of wisdom here given, towards leading a happy life on earth, we need not be surprised to find, that much importance is attached to keeping the king's commandment, for conscience sake towards God. We find St. Paul, in the New Testament, urging this duty on the attention of Christians, as one which is most needful for their peaceful enjoyment of life, as well as acceptable to God their Saviour. See 1 Tim. 2. 2, 3. The preacher's instructions on this subject apply to a form of government different from our own. But when he speaks of the king as doing "whatsoever pleaseth him," and as being above responsibility to any man, he by no means implies that the king



is more free than his subjects from the obligation of duty towards God. Only he would counsel us to be subject to the powers that be, whether they duly discharge their duties or not, to be subject out of regard to our own peace, and out of regard to our duty to God. And as it is only to evil doers that they ought to be a terror, he warns us not to shrink from their sight, not to do those evil things which would make us afraid of their observation, but to submit to their commands, and to conform to their laws, with a wise discernment of times and seasons. For then we shall have no cause to be afraid of their power; if we do that which is good. See Rom. 13. 3.

This discernment of times and seasons, the judging rightly what is the fitting opportunity for doing, or not doing, whatsoever we are in doubt about, is one of the principal points in practical wisdom; for the want of which, "the misery of man is great upon him." Man cannot foresee the future; "He knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?" We form our plans therefore in the dark. We know not even whether we shall live to see the issue of them. We are not masters of our own lives, any more than of the wills and actions of those around us, on which the results of our own conduct must in some degree depend. In our conflict with death there is no escape; and we cannot avoid the encounter when our time is come. Neither righteousness, which commends us to the protection of the Lord, nor wickedness, which seems often to confer on men some temporary advantage here, can deliver us from this destroying power. Hence the uncertainty and vanity which belong to all our work that is doing under the sun. Hence they that rule often rule to their hurt; exercising dominion, and reckoning on its continuance, when they ought to have been preparing to resign it. And in like manner the wicked are often suddenly cut off, buried, and speedily forgotten; in the very place and time when they thought to have been alive and employed as heretofore, coming and going "from the place of the holy," attending outwardly on religious ordinances, but fulfilling their own will and pleasure. "This also is vanity." To plan in ignorance; to begin and not to finish; to purpose, and to be baffled in the execution; to miss the tide of opportunity; and to leave our work all unfinished in the midst of it; this is vanity and vexation of spirit. Let us then pray for wisdom to discern "both time and judgment." Let it be the end of all our plans to do exactly that which God would have us do, and exactly when He would have us to be doing it. Let us make it our business and pleasure, alike to live, if He gives us life; and to die, if He sends us death. Let us be diligent in the duties of to day, taking no anxious care for to morrow; ever planning, not for this world's uncertain future, but for the sure issues of eternity.

*The Preacher declares the end of the good and of the evil.*

11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

12 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear be-fore him:

13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow: because he feareth not before God.

14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth: that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that

this also is vanity.

15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also *there is that* neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek *it* out, yet he shall not find *it*; yea farther; though a wise man think to know *it*, yet shall he not be able to find *it*.

## LECTURE 1081.

*Of being content to find God's ways inscrutable.*

IN choosing our course of life, we are apt to be beguiled by the seeming impunity of sinners. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." There are some who carry this so far, as to ask with scoffing words, "where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet. 3. 4. There are few who are altogether proof against this fallacy, few who would not better resist temptation, if they felt sure that the punishment of sin would follow straightway upon transgression. But the time thus interposed is designed by God for our trial. It is the means by which He proves what is in our hearts. It is also the opportunity which He gives us for repenting, and turning unto Him. And it is certain, as we are here warned, that however long judgment be delayed, it shall in the end "be well with them that fear God," but "it shall not be well with the wicked."

A retribution after this life ended is here suggested to the mind. And the writer of this book having first shewn the vanity of any mere worldly pursuit, whilst he admitted the excellency of this world's blessings when enjoyed as gifts of God

according to his will, has now come to the mention, or all but the mention, of that future state of being, which makes even the best of this world's goods but little worth in the comparison. For this he had prepared us by teaching, that however excellent life may be, death is more so, and the house of mourning a better place to visit than the house of feasting. See Ch. 7. 1, 2. But he now intimates the matter much more clearly; telling us that however long the sinner's life may last, it is but as a shadow; and leading to the conclusion, that in reality, in the abiding reality of another life, they that fear not God shall suffer for it.

He had indeed observed before, how frequently it happens, that as far as this life is concerned the wicked often seem to fare as well as the righteous, and the righteous to suffer as much as the wicked. And this had led him to commend mirth; it had given him occasion to set forth the goodness of God, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," Matt. 5. 45, who has connected so much of pleasure with the many natural actions that are common to men of every character, and who brings it to pass, that even this kind of pleasure is enjoyed most truly, and most largely, by those who receive and use it as his gift. These topics had been previously enlarged upon. See Ch. 2. 15. 24. And as if to prevent all misapprehension on the subject, they are here once more referred to, in connexion with the positive assurance, that it shall be well with them that fear God, but not with those who fear Him not. Let us then use this world as not abusing it. See 1 Cor. 7. 31. Let us enjoy all that God gives us here, under the solemn conviction, that we shall have to give account of our enjoyment hereafter; when they who have here enjoyed selfishly, wastefully, and intemperately, will perish miserably; whilst they who have here enjoyed soberly, and thankfully, will be made partakers of joy eternal.

And if after all we cannot reconcile all that we see on earth with our notions of God's superintending providence, if we cannot answer the many difficult questions arising from the permission of evil in the world, or if we are unable to see clearly the force of the reasoning which is set before us on the subject in this book, we may at least learn from that which is here written, to be content to remain without satisfaction for the present. Even to Solomon, with all his wisdom, and with all the light of inspiration, the ways of God were found to be past searching out. No wonder that they are so found to be by us. Let us labour to understand them. And let us also acquiesce in finding them inscrutable. Let us delight in knowing all we can of God. And the more we are baffled in the search, let us so much the more set our hearts upon attaining to that heaven, where we shall see Him as He is, and know even as we are known.



*The Preacher exhorts to joy and diligence.*

1 For all this I considered in my heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.

2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked: to the good, and to the clean, and to the innocent: to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner: and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know nothing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

## LECTURE 1082.

*Reasons for labouring, and rejoicing, in the Lord.*

The most powerful consideration, in quieting our doubts and difficulties as to the lot of the righteous here, is this, "that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God." We need not be perplexed at all, if we could bring home to our hearts this one most satisfactory assurance. He who made heaven and earth will take good care of those who serve and please Him. He who contrived that we should be capable of feeling happiness and misery, will be sure to allot happiness, infinitely above comparison with any transitory pain which they may suffer, to those who believe in Him, and love Him, and make it their delight to obey his commandments. It may be true that no one could tell from their lot on earth whether God is loving them or not. And this is probably the meaning of the words, "no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them." Still they, and all that concerns them, are in the hand of God. He will never let them lose by serving Him.

And if He seem now for a time to hide away his face from them, this is only that He may in the end make them all the more happy in enjoying the light of his countenance for ever.

Under the Old Testament the people of God were led to expect a visible immediate retribution of good and evil. But from the time that they rejected God from being the only king over them, this dispensation appears to have been by degrees withdrawn. And we find in the Psalms, as well as in Ecclesiastes, the expression of surprise at this circumstance, that "all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked." This state of things is here once more referred to, as a reason why "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live." And not only do things happen alike to the evil and good whilst alive; but death overtakes both alike, death severs both alike from all that they here purpose or possess, all that they feel, or desire, or enjoy. This, the preacher declares, "is an evil among all things that are done under the sun." It is an evil resulting from the fall of man, from the general corruption of human nature, from the sentence of death having passed on all men unto condemnation. And when we think of our common lot, when we view the life and death of the righteous as in many things like to that of the wicked, we might be almost inclined to renounce the enjoyment of any thing which the wicked enjoy, to leave this world, and all its joys, and also all its employments, to them who are of this world only. Such has been the conclusion of numbers amongst devout minded men. And acting on such principles, they have retired into deserts, or dwelling in the midst of cities have renounced all the ties and duties and pleasures of domestic life, all or nearly all the offices of social existence.

It seems to be against such errors as these, long prevalent in the eastern parts of the world, that the Preacher directs these exhortations, that we should eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart, that our raiment should not be mean nor slovenly, and our personal appearance not neglected, that the husband should live joyfully with his wife, and that we should discharge with our utmost zeal and diligence the duties of that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us. Let us give heed to his instructions, and comply with the spirit of his exhortations. Let us weigh well the reason given for our diligence, that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." And let us thankfully lay to heart this ground of our rejoicing in the use of the good things of earth, "God now accepteth thy works." All things may come alike to all; but how differently are they regarded and received! How happy they, and only they, who labour diligently, and enjoy thankfully; who labour, as serving the Lord, and who enjoy, as glorifying Him from whom alone all good things come!

*The transient character of all and prudence.*

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to them all.

12 For man knoweth not his time, as the fishes that are taken in no evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare: so are the sons of men: when it shall suddenly upon them.

13 This wisdom have I seen, also under the sun, and it seemeth great unto me:

14 There was a little city, and

few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:

15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city: yet no man remembered that same poor man.

16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.

17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.

18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

## LECTURE 1083.

*The advantage of being as well estimated as possible.*

However diligently we labour, however prudently we plan, however reasonably and temperately we are disposed to enjoy, we ought to be aware, that in this present life, the success of our exertions, and the continuance of our enjoyments, are liable to many casualties. It is often to be seen, "under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to them all." That is to say, all depend upon convenient opportunity, all are affected by circumstances so numerous, and so hard to discern beforehand, that because we know not how they will happen, and cannot say how they are caused, we call them, for want of a better name, the effect of accident, or chance. And thus we find the word "chance" used in the New Testament, in the narrative of the good Samaritan: "by chance there came down a certain priest that way." Luke 10. 31. So that we need not scruple to speak of a thing happening by chance, accident, or casualty: provided we bear constantly in mind, that though many things occur of which we know not the cause, nothing is independent of the government of God.

It is for want of knowing the time of danger, that fishes are taken in the net, and birds are caught in the snare. And so it often happens to man, that for want of greater foresight, because he cannot with all his wisdom see the end from the beginning,



because he can only conjecture with probability, and cannot know with certainty, how others will act, or feel, or think, on whom his own conduct and its issue must in some measure depend; therefore it often happens, that when a man has done his best, and has chosen most wisely according to his means of judging, still he is "snared in an evil time;" and when he looks for prosperity he is overtaken by disaster. This however is no valid reason against exercising the best wisdom that we can, under the circumstances in which we are placed. It is no argument against the use of good sense and skill; but rather it ought to urge us to cultivate these faculties more carefully, and to apply them more constantly to all our conduct. The instance of a man's delivering a city by his wisdom, when a great king laid siege to it with a mighty force, shews how much may be done by skill and judgment; and compels us to acknowledge that "Wisdom is better than strength." Wisdom may indeed be sometimes baffled by unforeseen circumstances. Or it may succeed, and not be duly honoured; when not recommended by the wealth, rank, or power, which are apt to engross the admiration of mankind. Or its good effect may be hindered by the wickedness of some party concerned; it often happening, in the order of God's providence, that "one sinner destroyeth much good." Yet wisdom is better than strength notwithstanding. Yes, it "is better than weapons of war." The wise usually prevail against the strong. And especially in quiet times, "the words of wise men" are of more weight with their fellow creatures, than the turbulence of a crowd, and of its leaders.

Hence we are left to draw the conclusion, that though no wisdom will ensure success in life, yet our best way to be happy here is to act on wise principles, to exercise prudence, skill, and judgment, "under the sun," that is to say in reference to our present affairs, as preferable to strength and force. This it is that makes man master of the brute creation. This it is that gives to civilized nations their great advantage over savages. This it is which renders those who are well educated so superior to those who are not. And this proves that all ought to be as well educated as possible, all ought to have the powers of the mind as highly cultivated, and as well directed and informed, as their circumstances in life allow. Man would then be so much happier, as far as this life is concerned. And he would also be so far better qualified for living by faith in a world which is to come. The more his reason prevails over his passions, and the more he is in the habit of referring to the future, in his conduct for the present, he is so far the more likely to see, that the highest and best of wisdom, the only wisdom which no chance can baffle, is to submit his will to the will of God, and to spend his life in preparation for eternity.

*The Preacher remarketh on wisdom, and on the want of it.*

1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.*

2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth *him*, and he saith to every one *that he is a fool.*

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

5 There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler:

6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.

10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.

11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a

babbler is no better.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!

17 Blessed *art* thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all *things*.

20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

## LECTURE 1084.

*The wisdom of not meddling with affairs of state.*

Wisdom being one of the chief means towards a happy life on earth, some rules and observations, relating to the use of it, and to the want of it, are here set down. Let us remember then, that "a little folly" is of serious damage to a well established reputation. Let us observe, that the heart of a wise man,

compared with that of a foolish one, is like being on the right hand, compared with being on the left. Let us note how a foolish person exposes his foolishness, and let us beware of proclaiming our own. Let us be aware, that when a man incurs the displeasure of those above him, it is more wise to yield meekly, than to resist, and lose his post of usefulness and profit. And let rulers take warning, how great an error it is in them, to promote the foolish to places of dignity, to the prejudice of the wealthy and the great. There is no wisdom, let us be assured, in laying snares for others; they who do so may probably themselves fall into them. There is no wisdom in breaking through a neighbour's hedge. A serpent shall bite the hand that does it. There is no wisdom in removing a neighbour's landmark. The stone shall hurt him who moves it; and the wood shall endanger him who endeavours to cleave it.

Further, it may be seen how largely wisdom supplies the place of strength, when one whets the blunt edge of iron, and works with so much the greater ease. The like appears in words used for the charming of serpents, or in those with which a babbler may be silenced. The excellency of wisdom may also be perceived in the graciousness of the words of a wise man's mouth. Whereas the lips of the fool are hurtful to all parties; he wearies both himself and his acquaintance, with his much talking, and with his foolish questioning. He has to ask the way even to his own city. So grossly wanting in sense and attention are some amongst mankind! So selfish, as well as foolish, are they; not caring how much they trouble others, if they save a little trouble to themselves!

It is also a part of wisdom not to curse the king, not to speak evil words, nor even harbour evil thoughts, against those who are in station of authority. True it is, that the land fares ill, when its prince is a child, and when its rulers feast at unseasonable hours. Yet it is not for every one to make this reflexion, when such is unhappily the case. As a building will decay through neglect of its owner, so a state may come to ruin, when those who govern give themselves to excess of feasting, instead of attending to its wealth and welfare. Whereas it is undoubtedly well for the land, when they who bear rule have legitimate authority, and refrain from self indulgence and excess. But it is the wisdom of persons in private station, to mind their own affairs, and not intermeddle with those of the state; to use no disrespectful language, and to harbour no hard thoughts, against "the powers that be." Rom. 13. 1. So may they pass more peaceably through this present life. So may they live more acceptably in the sight of God their Saviour. And so may they be the better fitted for that heavenly kingdom, in which He who shall reign for ever is altogether righteous and good.



*The Preacher exhorted to beautiful almsgiving.*

1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight: for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

4 He that reserveth the wind shall not sow: and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not

thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:

8 But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

#### LECTURE 1085.

*Of giving and enjoying, with a view to the future judgment.*

In treating of the way to enjoy as much of happiness as this vain transitory life can yield, it was not likely that the inspired preacher would omit to mention almsgiving; the pleasure of doing good to others, with that which belongs to ourselves. Accordingly we find him here exhorting us to give largely, and to give freely. And we may apply to our own conduct the reasons here assigned for large and free almsgiving. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." What we give, however freely we give it, will be returned to our advantage; for it is regarded as lent unto the Lord. And we are assured in the book of Proverbs, that He will not fail to repay it. See Prov. 19. 17. "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." This would be a reason with many against giving. If evil days are apprehended, they would rather be inclined to hoard for their own use. But when trouble comes, they are likely to lose all that they have laid by for themselves. Whereas that which they have lent unto the Lord is in safe keeping. No evil that may happen on earth can rob them of treasure in heaven.

In the giving of abundance we have a pattern in the clouds, which when full of rain, part with it for the refreshment of the

earth, and in the falling of trees, which prove a benefit to those in whose neighbourhood they fall. And if we are tempted to withhold our bounty until quite sure that it will not be misplaced, we may profitably remark, that "he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Such hesitation would prevent our enjoying the fruits of the earth. We cannot be sure of weather beforehand. We can no more account for the changes of wind and clouds, than we can explain the formation and growth of a child that is unborn. Therefore we ought to sow in due season, be the weather what it may; taking the best opportunity that the wind and clouds admit of. And in like manner we ought to give alms largely without hesitation, taking the best means in our power to prevent the abuse of our almsgiving, but not waiting and giving nothing until we feel quite sure that our alms will not be abused.

"Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity." This also is probably mentioned as an argument for our giving largely and freely. However much we enjoy life and all its blessings, let us remember life will not last always. After the days of youth and health follow those of old age and decay. And it might be truly said to those who lived before Christ's coming, and before there was ground to look for his second coming speedily, that after this life ended the days of darkness will be many. All that happened after death would be vanity, as far as concerned those who were lying in the grave. They could have no pleasure and no profit in the goods which they left behind them when they died. And therefore it would be their wisdom, their gain, their pleasure, their best way to enjoy their goods, to give them away largely whilst yet alive.

And to the like purpose seems to be the exhortation following: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." That is to say, there is a judgment to come; enjoy youth thankfully, but enjoy it as one who must give account of thy enjoyments. God delights to see thee happy. He has filled the spirits of the young with joy, and He is well pleased to witness their gladness of heart; provided they put away evil as well as sorrow, sin no less than sadness. For youth also, remember, is but transitory, like life itself; youth and its joyous spirits, as well as life and its many pleasures, as well as wealth, and all the good things which it procures, are talents, for the due use of which all must hereafter give account to God.

*The Preacher exhorteth to remember God in youth.*

1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ;

2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain :

3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low ;

5 Also when they shall be afraid of *that which is high*, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail : because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets :

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel

broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was : and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher ; all is vanity.

9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge ; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words : and *that which was written was* upright, even words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished : of making many books *there is no end* ; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter : Fear God, and keep his commandments : for this is the whole duty of man.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be good*, or whether *it be evil*.

## LECTURE 1086.

*The wisdom of serving God all our life long.*

In this concluding chapter, the Preacher lays down another great principle of happy living, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Live a holy life from the beginning. Give to God, not that which costs you nothing, not merely the years when you can no longer enjoy the world, but the prime of your health and strength. This is the way to be happy whilst young, and to be happy as long as life endures. But alas, how few act on this advice ! How many refuse to think of God, and of his



word and will, until the years come when they are forced to own, "I have no pleasure in them;" With both body and mind worn out in the service of another master, they at length bethink themselves of Him who made them; and offer to become his servants, when they have no strength left for doing his work. This is when their faculties are so dimmed by age, that it is with them as though there were neither sun nor daylight, moon nor stars; but only clouds and rain one after another. Then are they as a house whose keepers tremble, and the strong men bow themselves down; a house left to desolation and decay; in which there are none who grind corn for food, none to look out of the windows, or to go out of the doors. Then are they awakened by the slightest noise, and yet insensible to the sweetest sounds, easily alarmed, grey headed, like the almond tree in blossom, unequal to the slightest burden, incapable of the most faint desire, bound to their long home, with the mourners in the streets ready to make lamentation. Then is the silver cord loosed, and the golden bowl broken, the cord and bowl of health and life. And the human frame, that masterpiece of art divine, then becomes like a pitcher broken at the fountain, or a wheel broken at the cistern. For, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

And yet it is not till then that very many of mankind would begin to think of their Creator, and to prepare for appearing in his presence! Most vain of all vanities! Most foolish of all foolishness! Well might the Preacher seek for figures the most expressive, wherewith to denounce this folly, for words the most acceptable wherewith to recommend that early piety, which is our true wisdom! May his sayings be as goads to stir us up to a life holy and religious from first to last! And like nails firmly driven home, may these rules of happy living be fastened in our memories, by the preaching of our living ministers, under direction of the one Shepherd of our souls! Amongst the multitude of guides who offer to direct us, to whom should we go but to Him, who has the words of eternal life? See John 6. 68. In what book but his Scriptures should we study how to be happy both here and hereafter? And if, according to the Preacher, this is "the conclusion of the whole matter," that we should fear God, and do his will, out of regard to a future judgment, where can we find, in the Old Testament, any thing more like to this description of "the everlasting Gospel," given us by an angel in the New: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come?" Rev. 14. 6, 7.

God give us grace so to fear his judgments as not to incur his displeasure! God grant that we may so love Him, and so obey his will, that we may have no room to fear, but only to hope, to love, and to rejoice, henceforth for evermore!

*The Bride and Bridegroom address each other.*

- 1 The song of songs, which is  
Solomon's.
- 2 Let him kiss me with the  
kisses of his mouth: for thy  
love is better than wine.
- 3 Because of the savour of thy  
good ointments thy name is as  
ointment poured forth: there-  
fore do the virgins love thee.
- 4 Draw me, we will run after  
thee: the king hath brought  
me into his chambers: we will  
be glad and rejoice in thee, we  
will remember thy love more  
than wine: the upright love thee.
- 5 I *am* black, but comely, O  
ye daughters of Jerusalem, as  
the tents of Kedar, as the cur-  
tains of Solomon.
- 6 Look not upon me, because I  
*am* black, because the sun hath  
looked upon me: my mother's  
children were angry with me;  
they made me keeper of the  
vineyards: *but* mine own vine-  
yard have I not kept.
- 7 Tell me, O thou whom my  
soul loveth, where thou feedest,  
where thou makest *thy flock* to  
rest at noon: for why should I  
be as one that turneth aside by  
the flocks of thy companions?  
8 If thou know not, O thou  
fairest among women, go thy  
way forth by the footsteps of  
the flock, and feed thy kids be-  
side the shepherds' tents.
- 9 I have compared thee, O my  
love, to a company of horses in  
Pharaoh's chariots.
- 10 Thy cheeks are comely with  
rows of *jewels*, thy neck with  
chains of *gold*.
- 11 We will make thee borders  
of gold with studs of silver.
- 12 While the king *sitteth* at  
his table, my spikenard sendeth  
forth the smell thereof.
- 13 A bundle of myrrh is my  
wellbeloved unto me; he shall  
lie all night betwixt my breasts.
- 14 My beloved is unto me as  
a cluster of camphire in the  
vineyards of En-gedi.
- 15 Behold, thou *art* fair, my  
love; behold, thou *art* fair;  
thou *hast* doves' eyes.
- 16 Behold, thou *art* fair, my  
beloved, yea, pleasant: also our  
bed *is* green.
- 17 The beams of our house *are*  
cedar, *and* our rafters of fir.

#### LECTURE 1087.

*As Christ has loved the church, so ought we to love Him.*

The Psalms of David were usually composed in reference to events in his own life, and at the same time were so written as to signify matters relating to the life and kingdom of Christ. In like manner "The song of Solomon" seems to relate in the first instance to his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, and yet to point in a prophetic sense to the spiritual marriage and unity which is between Christ and his Church. We cannot indeed speak positively on this subject, because we do not find the song of Solomon applied to Christ in the New Testament, as the Psalms of David often are. But we have many reasons for thinking it most highly probable.

First, Solomon was himself a type of Christ. For the promises

of God to David concerning him were such as cannot have been all fulfilled literally in Solomon, but must in part have their fulfilment spiritually in Christ. See 1 Chron. 17. 11—14. Next, the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh, at a time when he was most devoutly serving God, is best accounted for by supposing, that it was done under God's own direction to typify the calling of the Gentiles. Further, the forty fifth psalm, called in the title "A Song of loves," is applied to Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews. See Heb. 1. 8. But it is highly probable that this psalm applies in the first instance to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. And to pass from probable conjecture to certain truth, we know that in the New Testament marriage is spoken of as a mystical representation of the union and love, subsisting between Christ and his Church. See Eph. 5. 23, 24. 31, 32. If therefore we find in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, a song, or sacred poem, expressing all the ardour of conjugal affection, though it be not said that it relates to Christ and to the Church, yet when we remember Christ's account of all these Scriptures, that they testify of Him, see John 5. 39, and when we call to mind the language of the New Testament as to the spiritual meaning of the marriage bond, we can have little room left to doubt, that the bridegroom here spoken of is Christ, and the bride his spouse the Church.

Indeed it is not only in one passage of the New Testament that this figurative sense of marriage is to be met with. Our Lord, in answer to the disciples of John, speaks of Himself as "the bridegroom." Matt. 9. 15. So also does John the Baptist, in comparing himself with Christ. See John 3. 28. And we find this figure again in the parable of the "ten virgins." Matt. 25. 1. And in the book of Revelation the Church is compared to "a bride adorned for her husband;" and is soon afterwards expressly called, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Rev. 21. 2, 9. Nor can we wonder that God should graciously vouchsafe to use this striking image, in the revelation of his dealings with mankind through Christ. We know that He has no passions like to ours. Yet when He would signify his abhorrence of iniquity, we find Him speaking of Himself as influenced by grief, anger, hatred, and revenge. How much more, when we remember that "God is love," 1 John 4. 8, how much more may we expect Him to reveal his tender regard for those whom He has redeemed in Christ Jesus, under the image of a bridegroom's affection for his bride. Let us listen, therefore, reverently to the glowing language here set forth as interchanged between husband and wife, in a time and country far distant from our own. And let us constantly interpret it as signifying to us: Thus has Christ loved his spouse the Church; thus ought we to love our Lord.



*The Bridegroom continueth to converse with the Bride.*

- 1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.  
 2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.  
 3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.  
 4 He brought me to the banquetting house, and his banner over me was love.  
 5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.  
 6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.  
 7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.  
 8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.  
 9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.  
 10 My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
 11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;  
 12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;  
 13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
 14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.  
 15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.  
 16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.  
 17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

## LECTURE 1088.

*The invitation of Christ to his Church.*

Poetry is one of the human means, which it has pleased the Holy Spirit to make use of, in the revelation of the divine will. And poetry often implies a certain degree of fiction, representing things somewhat otherwise than they really are, not in order to deceive, but with a view to set forth truth in a more pleasing and impressive manner. Thus in this sacred poem we find Solomon spoken of as a shepherd; the bride enquiring of him where he makes his flock to rest at noon, and he in like manner bids her feed her kids beside the shepherds' tents; see Ch. 1. 7, 8; not as if this were really their employment, but because it is an occupation at once simple, natural, and peaceable, and one which

yields to those engaged in it many opportunities for happy meditation, and for the exercise of pure and sincere affection.

We are to imagine therefore a scene of pastoral felicity; the parties a king and a king's daughter, represented as engaged in pastoral pursuits, newly married, and holding such affectionate conversation with each other as would become persons in their station and circumstances. We are to remember further, that all this is to be conceived as having been done and said in a time so remote, and in a country so distant from our own, that the customs and notions and manner of conversation would be sure to be very different from ours. We are to add that the poem is written in a language which has not been commonly spoken even by the Jews themselves for above two thousand years, and which in many respects is as unlike our own as possible. And we shall then not be surprised to find, that many of the figures of speech sound strange to our ears, and that many of the images and sentiments appear hard to reconcile with our notions of what is pleasing and becoming.

And yet under all these disadvantages we cannot fail to find much to admire, and much which if we study for the sake of being edified may tend to our edification. Let us take for instance the description of reviving spring: "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." Here is a picture on which the mind delights to dwell, a striking picture of that season, in which God's creative work seems as it were repeated from year to year. But how much more delightful is the thought, that it is Christ who in these words invites his church to enjoy a perpetual spring; and that all the glories of renewed nature are but a figure of that more glorious renewal, which by the grace of God is perpetually going on in the hearts and souls of his true disciples! Oh who that so interprets this animating description, and conceives himself to be here invited to awake, and to arise, and to come to Christ by faith, with love, who can have the heart to refuse the invitation?

*The Bridegroom and Bride separate, and meet again.*

- 1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.  
 2 I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.
- 3 The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?
- 4 It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.
- 5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roses, and by the kinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.
- 6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?
- 7 Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.
- 8 They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.
- 9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.
- 10 He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.
- 11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

## LECTURE 1089.

*The glory of the heavenly Bridegroom.*

At the commencement of this chapter there appears to be an account of a temporary separation between the Bridegroom and the Bride, between Christ and his Church. We know that such estrangement often happens between those who are most near to each other here. The marriage union, though well adapted to soften our evil tempers, is by no means sure to heal them. And it may happen to either party, to have to seek for the other when estranged, by making kind advances, and hearty confessions, and declarations of undiminished affection. Nor do such advances often fail of success. They who have become so much to one another, as to be termed in Scripture "one flesh," Gen. 2. 24, have more ties of intimate communion than either party would wish to rend asunder, when the matter is calmly considered. And the tide of feeling, being once turned in the right direction, is apt to flow, after the check thus felt for a time, more vehemently than before.

In the conjugal union, when estrangement takes place, the



fault is as often on one side as on the other. When Christ hides away his face from his Church, we may be sure either that the Bride has provoked this chastisement, or that He does it to prove her faithfulness and love. It is not for us of this generation to tax our fathers with their sins, or to pronounce judgment on those who went before us, as having by their transgressions provoked the Lord to look coldly on his Church. Yet we cannot but feel, upon a review of past ages and their history, that He who has promised to be with his Church always, even unto the end of the world, has not shewn his presence in respect to the piety of his people, or in respect to the spreading abroad of his Gospel, as largely as might have been expected, had not the Church greatly erred, and grievously transgressed. At the same time, we may perhaps justly hope, that his seeming absence has been in part designed to exercise and prove our faith and love to Him; in whom, although we see Him not, we ought continually to rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Let us at all events plead earnestly in prayer, that He may make the light of his countenance to shine upon us. Let the description here given us of the Bridegroom's glory, make us long to have Christ abide amongst us, in power and great majesty. We cannot indeed behold his glory, as long as we continue in the flesh. But it makes all the difference as to his being with us, whether we believe and rejoice in his presence. Present He is every where, and every where powerful, every where glorious; whether men acknowledge it or not. But how great is the advantage of those amongst mankind, by whom his presence is acknowledged, and his divine majesty revered! They feel that there is ever nigh them One able and willing to protect them, One who helps them, guards them, loves them. He supplies all their wants. And they thankfully look to Him as supplying them. In affliction He yields them consolation. In prosperity He affords them joy. In sickness He gives them that which is better than health of body, profit to the soul. As their Example, He shews them how they ought in every thing to fulfil that, which He has taught them as their Prophet, and commanded as their King. As their great High Priest, He has made atonement for their sins, by his death on earth, and He is ever making intercession in their behalf in heaven. And when they regard Him as their Judge, however terrible his coming may be unto his enemies, they who are his faithful servants look upon his chariot as "paved with love," and can join sincerely with St. John in saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22. 22.

*The beauty of the Bride.*

- 1 Behold, thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair; thou *hast* doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair *is* as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.
- 2 Thy teeth *are* like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none *is* barren among them.
- 3 Thy lips *are* like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech *is* comely: thy temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.
- 4 Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.
- 5 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.
- 6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.
- 7 Thou *art* all fair, my love; *there is* no spot in thee.
- 8 Come with me from Lebanon, *my* spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.
- 9 Thou *hast* ravished my heart, my sister, *my* spouse; thou *hast* ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.
- 10 How fair *is* thy love, my sister, *my* spouse! how much better *is* thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!
- 11 Thy lips, O *my* spouse, drop *as* the honeycomb: honey and milk *are* under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments *is* like the smell of Lebanon.
- 12 A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
- 13 Thy plants *are* an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spike-nard.
- 14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:
- 15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.
- 16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, *that* the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

## LECTURE 1090.

*The excellency of the Church.*

There is nothing too beautiful or too precious to express what the Church ought to be, what the Church is as far as it is meet to be the object of the gracious affection of its Lord. What can be more comely than a beauteous bride? What more precious than the ornaments which become a youthful and lovely queen? What more just than the application of these images, to express

the comeliness of the Church, not indeed as it hitherto has been realized on earth, but as we find it described in the word of God. Let us take its fair proportions thence. Let us view and admire the beauty there described; that we may be the more inclined, each in our own place and part, to forward the blessed day, when Christ shall "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," but "holy and without blemish." Eph. 5. 27.

Behold then the excellent beauty of the Bride. Imagine a people not conformed to this world. They are rich, and wise, and noble, and happy, but not after this world's fashion. In themselves, they are masters of their fleshy lusts. Instead of glorying in their power or privileges, they do all to the glory of Christ. The greater they are, so much the more they desire to be the servants of all; that they may be so much the more like Him. The better they are, so much the more are they apt to esteem others better than themselves. They have been born again to the simplicity and purity of infants. They live a new and heavenly life; above the fear of man; resisting and defeating the malice of the devil; so using this world, as not abusing it; so living that they are at any moment willing to depart; so dying that their death is gain.

Viewed as members of a body in connexion with each other, it is their great characteristic to be one. They have one faith, one Lord, one baptism; and therefore they are one in outward communion, one in unity of spirit, and above all one in love. Incapable of deceiving or defrauding one another, they have no need nor use for oaths. Incapable of wilfully hurting one another, they are strangers to wars and fightings. Devoid of selfishness, they cannot be covetous, they cannot be ambitious. But either they have all things in common, or they give so largely and so freely, the richer to the poorer, that none can be long very rich or very poor. They are one on earth amongst each other; they are one with those who have departed this present life; they are one with all who in all ages have loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

For this is their bond of union with each other, they are all one with Christ. They are one with Him in the communion of the same Spirit, in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. They are one with Christ, as He is one with the Father; even so they are one with Him. What a holy, happy, heavenly community! What a pattern to all others of mankind! What an object of admiration both to men and angels! How beautiful in the sight of God Himself! Behold, we may conceive Him to say once more, when He shall look upon this new creation, Behold it is very good. "Thou art all fair," we may well believe that Christ will say with joy unto his spouse, when this sight shall be witnessed on earth, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee."



*The Bride seeketh and commendeth the Bridegroom.*

1 I am come into my garden, the keepers of the walls took my sister, my spouse: I have away my veil from me.

gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: 8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

eat, O friends; drink, yea, 9 What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

3 I have put off my coat: how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? 10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. 11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. 12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. 13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; 14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

8 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. 15 His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

9 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; 16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

## LECTURE 1091.

*That we share Christ's love with all his Church.*

In the prophet Isaiah we find the love of a husband for his wife made a type of the love of God towards his Church: "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name." Is. 54. 5. And again, "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Is. 62. 5. Indeed this particular figure of speech runs throughout the whole Old

Testament, and especially the prophetic writings; in which idolatry, that most awful alienation of the Church from God, is commonly called fornication or adultery. This gives us additional ground of reason, for considering this poem as representing, under the figure of conjugal affection, God's love unto his people, Christ's love unto his Church, and also theirs to Him.

But though we may safely and profitably take this view of the whole of this "Song of songs," Ch. 1. 1, we must beware of applying every particular here mentioned to so many several points in the history of our Saviour, or in the dispensation of his Gospel. For this we have no such warrant of high probability. For this we have no directions, no clue, no precedent, no guide, in any other portion of the word of God. And perhaps it is by reason of the license, which many interpreters have taken, thus to indulge their fancy, without limit of sobriety, reverence, or truth, that others have expressed themselves reluctant to admit, that there is any reference at all in this book to Christ, or to his Church, or to their mutual affection. Let us be content to see the general application of the whole; deeming it not unlikely, that the several parts are to a great extent merely ornaments of speech, adapted to the habits of the time and country, and designed to make the whole more impressive and instructive. Or if we apply any of the particular images in a spiritual sense to Christ and to his Church, let it be no further than we may seem to be guided, and sanctioned, by the acknowledged spiritual application of the like figures of speech, in other passages of the word of God.

It behoves us also to remember, that the Bride is a figure of the Church, of the whole company of believers, not of each individual Christian. And the language put into the mouth of the Bride, though such as the Church ought to use towards our Lord, is not to be adopted in its full extent by every one of us singly for himself. We are but members of the body; that body how extensive, how holy, how excellent; and we singly how unworthy, how frail, how insignificant! What can be more unwarrantable, than for any one of us by himself, to take as addressed altogether to himself, those expressions of affectionate endearment, which belong to the whole Church throughout all ages of the world? What can be more presumptuous than to speak as if we had an exclusive interest in Christ; when we ought to delight in feeling, that we share his love with countless millions of our brethren? To them as well as us He graciously stands at the door and knocks. See Rev. 3. 20. And however coldly and thanklessly they may have received Him at the first, it is their privilege and glory, no less than ours, to say, that which we ought never to say for ourselves, without comprehending them in the joyful declaration: "He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

*The Bridegroom accompaneth the Bride.*

- 1 Whither is thy beloved gone,  
O thou fairest among women?  
Whither is thy beloved turned  
aside? that we may seek him  
with thee.
- 2 My beloved is gone down  
into his garden, to the beds of  
spices, to feed in the gardens,  
and to gather lilies.
- 3 I saw my beloved's, and my  
beloved is mine: he feedeth a-  
mong the lilies.
- 4 Thou art beautiful, O my  
love, as Tirzah, comely as Je-  
rusalem, terrible as an army  
with banners.
- 5 Turn away thine eyes from  
me, for they have overcome me:  
thy hair is as a flock of goats  
that ascend from Gilead.
- 6 Thy teeth are as a flock of  
sheep which go up from the  
washing, whereof every one  
beareth twins, and there is not  
one barren among them.
- 7 As a piece of a pomegranate  
are thy temples within thy locks.
- 8 There are threescore queens,  
and fourscore concubines, and  
virgins without number.
- 9 My dove, my undefiled is but  
one: she is the only one of her  
mother, she is the choice one of  
her that bare her. The daugh-  
ters saw her, and blessed her;  
yea, the queens and the concu-  
bines, and they praised her.
- 10 Who is she that looketh  
forth as the morning, fair as the  
moon, clear as the sun, and ter-  
rible as an army with banners?
- 11 I went down into the gar-  
den of nuts to see the fruits of  
the valley, and to see whether  
the vine flourished, and the  
pomegranates budded.
- 12 Or ever I was aware, my  
soul made me like the chariots  
of Ammi-nadib.
- 13 Return, return, O Shulam-  
ite: return, return, that we may  
look upon thee. What will ye  
see in the Shulamite? As it were  
the company of two armies.

## LECTURE 1092.

*Of aiming at perfection, that we may please Christ.*

If we needed any further argument to shew, how highly proba-  
ble it is, that the Canticles, or Song of Solomon, ought to be  
interpreted of the love between Christ and his people, we may  
find such proof in the fact, that this has been the view generally  
taken of this book by the Church in every period. That our  
own church does not object to this view, may be concluded from  
the headings to the chapters in our Bibles. As for instance, the  
heading to this chapter runs thus: "The church professeth her  
faith in Christ. Christ sheweth the graces of the church, and  
his love towards her." And this sanction ought to have its  
weight with every enlightened member of the Christian com-  
munity. For although tradition, as an independent source of  
divine truth, is nothing, and when set up in that character, ought  
to be denounced, as usurping the office of revelation; yet tradi-  
tion, as an interpreter of Scripture, is much; and the more  
ancient and nigh to universal it is, so much the more is it entitled  
to attention and respect.



In this description of the graces of the bride, some of the figures of speech are repeated from the account of her beauty previously set forth. See ch. 4. 2, 3. And the unity and purity of the Church appears to be particularly pointed out, in these words, "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her." The unity of the Church having been previously insisted on, let us now turn our attention to its purity. What is meant by the bride being undefiled may be well explained by these words of S. Paul to the Corinthians: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. 11. 2, 3. A corruption of doctrine was the chief thing apprehended; such a corruption of doctrine as would be sure to lead to a corruption of practice. For the truth as it is in Christ Jesus is eminently practical. See Eph. 4. 21—32. And it would be to little purpose for the Church to be at unity, if it were at unity in error, if it were agreeing to hold false doctrine, or to uphold faulty practices. It must be undefiled, as well as one. It must be like-minded unto Christ; conformed in all that it believes and does to the pattern set forth in his word.

Nor is this spotless perfection set forth only as a grace suited to the whole Church as a body. It is one of the points, in which we know from other passages of Scripture, that the heavenly Bridegroom enjoins on each member, that which He enjoins on the whole community. "Be ye therefore perfect," He says to his disciples, both collectively and individually, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5. 48. And thus his apostle writes to the Colossians, concerning Christ in them, "the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Col. 1. 27, 28. For this, S. Paul adds, that he was labouring. For this every minister of the Gospel ought to labour, and pray, and watch, in behalf of Christ's people committed to his charge. For this therefore undoubtedly each Christian in particular ought to labour, and pray, and watch, in his own behalf. Not that any man should profess to have attained to this perfection; but that every man ought to set himself no less than this to aim at. And we may justly make this practical application of the words, in which the Bride's beauty is described: Thus, in order to be meet for the Bridegroom's love, thus ought we severally in the graces of our souls, as well as the whole Church in all its members, to be beautiful and comely, one and undefiled, spotless in doctrine, and presenting to those who would beguile us into sin, the unconquerable front of "an army with banners."

*The beauty of the Bride is once more commended.*

- 1 How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.
- 2 Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.
- 3 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.
- 4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory: thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.
- 5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.
- 6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!
- 7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.
- 8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;
- 9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.
- 10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.
- 11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.
- 12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.
- 13 The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

## LECTURE 1093.

*The Church, being justified, must be actually holy.*

When we consider who the Bridegroom is, and who the Bride, we may feel surprised to find the beauty of the latter dwelt upon so frequently and fully, rather than the glory and excellency of the former. Regarding Him indeed in his state of humiliation, and speaking of Him as He was "despised and rejected of men," the prophet Isaiah might say, "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." Is. 53. 2, 3. But another prophet, speaking of Him as He ought to be esteemed, calls Him "the desire of all nations." Hag. 2. 7. And we know that in becoming man, and dwelling amongst us, He left the glory which He had with the Father before the worlds began; see John 17. 5; a glory to which they who saw but a slight glimpse of it thus bare witness: "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." John 1. 14. And we know that since this his humiliation, since He vouchsafed to be made man, and to dwell amongst us, "God

also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2. 9—11.

Such being the glory of the Bridegroom, we may feel surprised to find so much stress laid on the beauty of the Bride; when we look upon the Church as actually consisting of frail mortal men, when we look within ourselves, and think of our own manifold transgressions, and when we consider how much reason the best amongst us have to own, each day of their lives, that they are miserable sinners. But so it has seemed good to God that the Church should be described. So it has pleased Him to view with favour and regard his own most marvellous work. True though it be that the Church consists of men taken out of this sinful world, themselves frail and sinful, it is also true that God loved us when we were sinners, see Rom. 5. 8., and that "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Eph. 5. 25, 26. Having thus done, He looks on it as clean from sin. The Lord has pleasure in his people, because whom God "did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. 8. 29, 30. He did, He does, He will. This is the method of God's dealing with his Church. It is by reason of righteousness imputed unto us, and on the ground of merits not our own but his, that we and all Christ's Church can alone find favour in his eyes, and can be fit for Him to long for and to love.

But though He justifies us freely, this is in order that we should thenceforth serve Him devoutly. That which God is graciously pleased to account us, we must thenceforth actually be. Having been called, and justified, sanctified, and cleansed, let us know that our way to please our Lord ever after, is that we be holy in all manner of conversation. This is true both of the Church, and of each individual believer. Let us endeavour therefore to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let our feet be swift to walk in the way of righteousness. Let our hands be diligent in doing good to one another. Let our knees be ever ready to bow down in devout adoration before God. Let our lips ever delight in speaking to the edification of each other, and to the glory of our Maker. Let every member, every limb, the head, the heart, the body, and the soul, all unite to work, and feel, to do and think, as Christ has enjoined us in his word. And all will then be comely in the highest sense, and will find favour in the sight of our Redeemer.



*The Bride commeth with the Bridegroom.*

1 O that thou wert as my brethren, that sucked the breasts of my mother: when I should find thee without, I should kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

2 I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house: and would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

3 His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

8 We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

9 If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

10 I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon: he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

12 My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.

## LECTURE 1094.

*That God has provided for our understanding love divine.*

In the constitution of man, there is no feeling more powerful than that of which God said at the beginning, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife." Matt. 19. 5. Its power is indeed clearly shewn, in its prevailing over filial affection, in its rendering the husband and the wife, though entire strangers beforehand, more near and dear unto each other, than either of them to their own parents. And this is felt to be so natural, and reasonable, and right, that the parents, unless singularly selfish, would not themselves have it otherwise; would not wish their son not to leave them for his wife, or their daughter not to leave them for her husband; to leave them, and though not

to love them less, yet to love some one else more dearly. So powerful is the feeling of conjugal affection ! So vehement in its nature, so strange in its effects ! So wonderfully combined, in this emotion, are passion, and reason, and imagination, that nothing is more hard to alter than the choice once firmly fixt; nothing is so superior to all other considerations, so little to be influenced by riches or poverty, health or sickness, danger, difficulty, or disaster, as this affection of husband and wife, once truly pledged, and truly requited. So that it is no figure of speech, but a plain statement of a well known truth, to say, that "love is as strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

Thankful we may be to God, who has implanted so deeply in our hearts a feeling, which when under due controul, constitutes in every rank of life the chief source of domestic happiness, and to which we may justly trace the origin of all civilized society. But we may thank God further, for having made use of this affection, as a means of teaching us in his holy word, the warmth and depth and liveliness of that divine regard, which He is pleased to avow for us, as well as of that devotedness of heart and soul, which we ought in return to cherish towards Him. It seems as if, in implanting this affection in us, besides his other wise and good ends in view, He had purposely been preparing us for better understanding our happiness, in being beloved of God, and in being privileged to love our Maker. And we may readily conceive, that He, who sees the end from the beginning, thus contrived that there never should be wanting upon earth a figure of heavenly love, that should come home to every man's bosom. But alas, in this fallen world, even the hallowed union of wedded life, like every other state of man, is liable to suffer detriment by human frailty; and oftentimes presents a scene of strife instead of peace, of enmity for love. Therefore it is doubtless that God has provided, in this sacred song, an instance of conjugal affection, in the case of a bride and bridegroom; taken at a period when the ardour of love is at its height, and is therefore, when rightly viewed, and reverently applied, most fit to signify how fervently we ought to love Christ, how entirely He loves us. May we learn this lesson from this book ! May we better love our Lord ! May we more implicitly believe that He regards us with love !

*The Bridegroom and Bride hasten each other.*

*14 Make haste, my beloved, a young hart upon the mountain  
and he shall like us & the 17 to come at spaces.*

#### LECTURE 1245.

*Christ's invitation. The prayer of the Church.*

One of the many difficulties in expounding this sacred song, now is determining which party it is that is speaking in the several portions. Sometimes it is doubtful whether the words are those of the principal persons, the Bridegroom and Bride, or those of their respective congregations. In this last verse, there seems nothing to determine whether the words are spoken by the Bridegroom, or by the Bride, or by both. Let us first conceive them to be addressed by Christ to his church. How gracious of Him, thus to invite his people to Himself! How affectionately did He himself with his own lips invite us all, saying, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11. 28. Instead of persuading us by terror, and charging us as the angel charged Lot, "Escape for thy life;" Gen. 19. 17: how kindly does He encourage us by gentleness, and draw us by the cords of love! how considerately does He hasten us, by promises and by privileges, by making it our instant gain to join ourselves to Him, our gain, our glory, and our joy!

And now if we be indeed joined to Him, great as is our gain immediately, great our glory, great our joy, we shall be still ardently longing to enter into a more close communion, to see Him, and to love Him, face to face. Happy as we are in being one with Him on earth, we shall look forward with devout desire, to being one with Him in an union more intimate in heaven. If we find so much of peace and joy in believing, what shall we find in knowing? what, in seeing with the sight celestial the majesty of Christ the King of glory? what, in hearing the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand sing his praise? what, in joining in that song ourselves? "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God," this is the frame of mind which S. Peter recommends to every Christian. 2 Pet. 3. 12. This is the interpretation to be put upon these words in the bride's mouth, "Make haste, my beloved." And thus it is written towards the close of the book of Revelation, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." Rev. 22. 17. Lord, we hear; give us grace to say that which Thou hast bidden us. We hear, Lord, in this portion of thy word, the voice of the Spirit and the Bride. Give us grace to pray after the pattern set before us, to pray with faith and hope and love, "Thy kingdom come." Matt. 6. 10.

END OF VOL. III.















